

# **SELF-RESTRAINT** V. **SELF-INDULGENCE**

BY  
**M. K. GANDHI**



**NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE**  
**AHMEDABAD**

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Till now this book was issued in two separate volumes; the reader will find in this new edition both of them issued in one. The collection has been revised and brought up-to-date. Thus, the reader will find, collected under one cover, all the writings of Gandhiji on this important subject.

September, 1947

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

That the first edition was sold out practically within a week of its publication, is a matter of joy to me. The correspondence that the series of articles collected in this volume has given rise to, shows the need of such a publication. May those who have not made self-indulgence a religion, but who are struggling to regain lost self-control which should under normal conditions be our natural state, find some help from a perusal of these pages. For their guidance the following instructions may prove needful :

1. Remember if you are married that your wife is your friend, companion and co-worker, not an instrument of sexual enjoyment.

2. Self-control is the law of your being. Therefore, the sexual act can be performed only when both desire it, and that too subject to rules which in their lucidity both may have agreed upon.

3. If you are unmarried you owe it to yourself, to society and to your future partner to keep yourself pure. If you cultivate this sense of loyalty, you will find it as an infallible protection against all temptation.

4. Think always of that Unseen Power which, though we may never see, we all feel within us as watching and noting every impure thought, and you will find that Power ever helping you.

5. Laws governing a life of self-restraint must be necessarily different from a life of self-indulgence. Therefore you will regulate your society, your reading, your haunts of recreation and your food.

You will seek the society of the good and the pure.

You will resolutely refrain from reading passion-breeding novels and magazines and read the works that sustain humanity. You will make one book your constant companion for reference and guidance.

# CONTENTS

## PART I

### *Gandhiji's Writings*

Prefaces . . . . .	IV
1. 'Towards Moral Bankruptcy' . . . . .	3
2 Birth Control . . . . .	39
3. Some Arguments Considered . . . . .	41
4 On the Necessity of Continence . . . . .	49
5. Self-Control . . . . .	57
6 Brahmacharya . . . . .	61
7. Truth v. Brahmacharya . . . . .	65
8 Purity . . . . .	68
9 In Confidence . . . . .	70
10 Abolish Marriage ! . . . . .	75
11 Conservation of Vital Energy . . . . .	78
12 Influence of Attitudes . . . . .	81
13 A Moral Struggle . . . . .	85
14. Vow of Brahmacharya . . . . .	88
15 'Startling Conclusions' . . . . .	93
16. Brahmacharya or Chastity . . . . .	96
17 Birth Control (I) . . . . .	99
18 Birth Control (II) . . . . .	102
19 Married Brahmacharya . . . . .	104
20 The Cause of It . . . . .	107
21 For Contraceptives . . . . .	109
22 For Women Reformers . . . . .	114
23. Self-Control again . . . . .	118
24. Birth Control through Self-Control . . . . .	121
25 What it is like . . . . .	123
26. A Witness from America . . . . .	125
27. 'A Voice in the Wilderness' . . . . .	126
28. Wonderful if True . . . . .	128
29 Sexual Perversion . . . . .	130
30 A Growing Vice ? . . . . .	132
31 Duty of Reformers . . . . .	133

# SELF-RESTRAINT V. SELF-INDULGENCE

*Control*

*Desire*

## PART I

GANDHIJI'S WRITINGS

## 'TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY'

## I

Kind friends continue to send me cuttings from Indian newspapers approvingly dealing with the question of birth control by the use of contraceptives. My correspondence with young men on their private conduct is increasing. I am able to discuss in these pages only an infinitesimal portion of the questions raised by my correspondents. American friends send me literature on the subject, and some are even angry with me for having expressed an opinion against the use of contraceptives. They deplore that as an advanced reformer in many ways I should be mediaeval in my views about birth control. I find too that the advocates of the use of contraceptives number among them some of the soberest of men and women of all lands.

I therefore thought that there must be something very decisive in favour of the methods advocated, and felt too that I should say on the subject more than I have done. Whilst I was thinking of the problem and of the question of reading the literature on the subject, a book called *Towards Moral Bankruptcy* was placed in my hands for reading. It deals with this very subject and, as it appears to me, in a perfectly scientific manner. The original is in French by M. Paul Bureau and is entitled '*D' Indiscipline des mœurs*' which literally means 'the indiscipline of morals'. The translation is published by Constable and Company and has an introduction by Dr. Mary Scharlieb, C. B. E., M. D., M. S. (Lond.). It covers 538 pages in 15 chapters.

Having read the book I felt that, before I summarized the author's views, I must in justice to the cause read the standard literature in favour of the methods advocated.

it is not necessary for man or woman to satisfy the sexual instinct except when the act is meant for race reproduction, even as it is not necessary for man or woman to eat except for sustaining the body. There is also the third position. There is a class of men who contend that there is no such thing as morality, or that, if there is, it consists not in exercising restraint but in indulgence of every form of animal appetite, so long as it does not so impair the constitution as to render it unfit for the very indulgence which is its object. For this extreme position I do not suppose M. Bureau has written his volume. For M. Bureau concludes his book by quoting Tom Mann's saying, "The future is for the nations who are chaste".

In the first part of his book M. Bureau has collected facts which make most dismal reading. It shows how vast organizations have sprung up in France which merely pander to man's basest tastes. Even the one claim of the advocates of contraceptives that abortions must disappear with the use of these methods cannot be sustained. "It is certain," says M. Bureau, "that during the twentyfive years that have especially seen the increase in France of anti-conceptionist methods, the number of criminal abortions has not become less". M. Bureau is of opinion that abortions are on the increase. He puts down the figure at anything between 275,000 and 325,000 per year. Public opinion does not look upon them with the horror that it did years ago.

## II

"In the wake of abortion," says M. Bureau, "come infanticide, incest, and crimes that outrage nature. There is nothing special to say about the first, except that the crime has become more frequent in spite of all the facilities offered to unmarried mothers and of the extension of anti-conceptionist practices and abortion. It no longer arouses the same reprobation among so-called respectable people, and juries usually return a verdict of 'not guilty'."

one case, i. e. Lot, deaths were 162 against 100 births. Next comes Tarn-et-Garonne with 156 deaths against 100 births. Even out of 19 areas where the birth rate is higher than the death rate, the difference is negligible in several cases. In ten areas alone is there an effective difference. The lowest death rate, i. e. 72 against 100 births, occurs in Morbihan and Pas-de-Calais. M. Bureau shows that this process of depopulation, which he calls 'voluntary death', has not yet been arrested.

M. Bureau then examines the condition of French provinces in detail, and he quotes the following paragraph from M. Gide written in 1914 about Normandy: "Normandy has lost in the course of 50 years more than 300,000 inhabitants, that is to say, a population equal to that of the whole department of the Orne. Every 20 years she now loses the equivalent of a department, and as she includes but five, a century will be enough to see her fat meadows empty of Frenchmen—I say advisedly of Frenchmen, for assuredly others will come to occupy them, and it would be a pity were it otherwise. Germans work the iron mines round Caen, and for the first time, only yesterday, a vanguard of Chinese labourers landed where William the Conqueror set sail for England." And M. Bureau adds by way of comment on the paragraph, "How many other provinces are in no better condition!"

He then goes on to show that this deterioration in population has inevitably led to the deterioration in the military strength of the nation. He believes that the cessation of emigration from France is also due to the same cause. He then traces to the same cause the decay of French colonial expansion, the decay of French commerce and the French language and culture.

M. Bureau then asks, "Are the French people who have rejected the ancient sexual discipline more advanced in securing happiness, material prosperity, physical health, and in intellectual culture?" He answers, "With regard to the improvement in health, a few words will suffice. However strong our wish to answer all

such technical progress would have been impossible, had not workmen of a more refined type, foremen more highly educated, perfectly trained engineers been found. . . . The industrial schools are of three kinds: professional, numbering over 500, with 70,000 pupils; technical, still more numerous, and some of them with over 1,000 pupils; lastly, the colleges devoted to higher instruction with their 15,000 pupils, which confer like the Universities the envied title of doctor. . . . 365 commercial schools attract 31,000 pupils and in innumerable schools courses of agriculture give instruction to over 90,000. What, compared with these 400,000 pupils in the different lines of the production of wealth, are the 35,000 pupils of our professional courses, and why, since 1,770,000 of our people, of whom 779,798 are below eighteen years of age, live by the cultivation of the soil, are there but 3,255 pupils in our special schools of agriculture?" M. Bureau is careful enough to note that all this phenomenal rise of Germany is not entirely due to the surplus of births over deaths, but he does contend with justice that given other favourable conditions a preponderating birth rate is an indispensable condition of national growth. Indeed, the proposition he has set forth to prove is that a growing birth rate is in no way inconsistent with great material prosperity and moral progress. We in India are not in the position of France so far as our birth rate is concerned. But it may be said that the preponderating birth rate, in India, unlike as in Germany, is no advantage to our national growth. But I must not anticipate the chapter that will have to be set apart for a consideration of Indian conditions in the light of M. Bureau's facts and figures and conclusions.

After dealing with an examination of German conditions where the birth rate preponderates over the death rate, M. Bureau says, "Are we not aware that France occupies the fourth place — and that a very long way below the third — in regard to the total sum of national wealth? France has an annual revenue from her investments of 25,000 million francs, while the Germans are

inexpressible. The licentious conduct of our young people, prostitution, pornography, and marriages for money, vanity or luxury, adultery and divorce, voluntary sterility and abortion, have debilitated the nation and stopped its increase; the individual has been unable to conserve his energies, and the quality of the new growth has diminished simultaneously with its quantity. 'Fewer births and more fine men' was the watchword, which had something enticing about it for those who, shut up in their materialistic conception of individual and social life, thought they could assimilate the breeding of men to that of sheep or horses. As Auguste Comte said with stinging force, these pretended physicians of our social ills would have done better to become veterinary surgeons, incapable as they always were of comprehending the infinite complexity of the psychology both of the individual and of the society.

"The truth is that of all the attitudes which a man adopts, of all the decisions at which he arrives, of all the habits which he contracts, there is none which exerts over his personal and social life an influence comparable to that exerted by his attitudes, his decisions, and his habits with regard to the appeals of the sexual appetite. Whether he resists and controls them, or whether he yields and allows himself to be controlled by them, the most remote regions of social life will experience the echo of his action, since nature has ordained that the most hidden and intimate action should produce infinite repercussions.

"Thanks to this very mystery, we like to persuade ourselves, when we violate in any way the moral discipline, that our misdeed will have no grievous consequence. As to ourselves, in the first place, we are satisfied, since our own interest or pleasure has been the motive of our action; as to society at large, we think it is so high above our modest selves that it will not even notice our misdeeds; and above all, we secretly hope that 'the others' will have the sense to remain devout and virtuous. The worst of it is that this cowardly calculation

intolerable attack on the freedom and autonomy of the individual, his right to happiness and to live his life in his own way."

The author contests the doctrine that "the organ of generation is like the rest" requiring satisfaction. "If it were," he says, "an organ like the others, how could we explain the absolute inhibitory power which the will possesses over it, or the fact that the awakening of sensuality, which pharisaism calls the sexual necessity, is the result of the innumerable excitements which our civilisation provides for young boys and girls several years before normal adult age?"

I cannot resist the temptation of copying the following valuable medical testimony collected in the book in support of the proposition that self-restraint is not only not harmful but necessary for the promotion of the health and perfectly possible :

"The sexual instinct," says Oesterlen, Professor at Tübingen University, "is not so blindly all-powerful that it cannot be controlled, and even subjugated entirely, by moral strength and reason. The young man, like the young woman, should learn to control himself until the proper time. He must know that robust health and ever-renewed vigour will be the reward of this voluntary sacrifice.)

"One cannot repeat too often that abstinence and the most absolute purity are perfectly compatible with the laws of physiology and morality, and that sexual indulgence is no more justified by physiology and psychology than by morality and religion."

"The example of the best and noblest among men," says Sir Lionel Beale, Professor at the Royal College in London, "has at all times proved that the most imperious of instincts can be effectively resisted by a strong and serious will, and by sufficient care as to manner of life and occupation. Sexual abstinence has never yet hurt any man when it has been observed, not only through exterior restrictive causes, but as a voluntary rule of conduct. Virginity, in fine, is not too hard to observe, provided that

and enlivens perception. Incontinence weakens self-control, creates habits of slackness, dulls and degrades the whole being, and lays it open to diseases which can be transmitted to several generations. To say that incontinence is necessary to the health of young men is not only an error, but a cruelty. It is at once false and hurtful."

"The evils of incontinence are well-known and undisputed," writes Dr. Surbled, "those produced by continence are imaginary; what proves this is the fact of the many learned and voluminous works devoted to the explanation of the former, while the latter still await their historian. As to these latter there are but vague assertions, which hide themselves, for very shame, in mere talk, but which will not endure the daylight."

"I have never seen," writes Dr. Montegazza in *La Physiologie de l'amour*, "a disease produced by chastity. . . . All men, and especially young men, can experience the immediate benefits of chastity."

Dr. Dubois, the famous professor of neuropathology at Berne, affirms that "there are more victims of neurasthenia among those who give free rein to their sensuality than among those who know how to escape from the yoke of mere animalism;" and his testimony is fully confirmed by that of Dr. Fere, physician at the Bicetre Hospital, who testifies that those who are capable of psychic chastity can maintain their continence without any fear for their health, which does not depend on the satisfaction of the sexual instinct.

"There has been unfitting and light talk," writes Professor Alfred Fournier, "about 'the dangers of continence for the young man'. I can assure you that if these dangers exist I know nothing about them, and that as a physician I am still without proof of their existence, though I have had every opportunity in the way of subjects under my professional observation.

"Besides this, as a physiologist I will add that true virility is not attained before the age of twentyone,

no disease ever comes through continence to normal subjects, who form the immense majority, while many diseases, very well known and very serious, are the results of incontinence. Nature has provided in the most simple and infallible way for the excess of nutrition which is represented by the seminal fluid and the menstrual flux.'

"Dr. Viry is therefore right in denying that the question is one of a true instinct or a real need. 'Every-one knows' what it would cost him not to satisfy the need of nourishment or to suppress respiration, but no one quotes any pathological consequences, either acute or chronic, as having followed either temporary or absolute continence. . . . In normal life we see the example of chaste men who are neither less virile in character, nor less energetic in will, nor less robust than others, nor less fitted to become fathers if they marry. . . . A need which can be subject to such variations, an instinct which accommodates itself so well to lack of satisfaction, is neither a need nor an instinct.'

"Sexual relationship is far from answering to any physiological need of the growing boy; quite the contrary, it is perfect chastity which is sternly required by the exigencies of his normal growth and development, and those who violate it cause irreparable injury to their health. 'The attainment of puberty is accompanied by great changes, a veritable disturbance of various functions, and a general development. The adolescent boy needs all his vital strength, for during this period there is often a weakening of the resistance to sickness. disease and mortality are higher than in the earlier period. . . . The long work of general growth, of organic evolution, that whole series of physical and psychic changes, at the end of which the child becomes a man, involves a toilsome effort of nature. At that moment, all overdriving is dangerous, but especially the premature exercise of the sexual function.' "

"In the eyes of sociologists," the author says, "social life is nothing but a network of multiform relations, nothing but an interlacing of actions and reactions, in the midst of which an activity, isolated and really separated from the rest, is unthinkable. On whatever step we resolve, whatever action we attempt, solidarity unites our resolution and our action to those of our brothers; and not even our most secret thought or most fugitive wish fails of an echo so distant that the mind is for ever incapable of measuring the distance. The social quality is not, in man, an adventitious or merely accessory quality: it is immanent, part of his humanity itself; he is a social being because he is a man. There is no other field of activity so truly our own: physiology and morality, economics and politics, the intellectual and aesthetic domains, the religious and the social, are all conditioned by a universal system of mysterious bonds and undefined relations. The bond is so firm, the net so closely meshed that sometimes the sociologist stands in real trouble before this immensity which unfolds itself before him, across all time and space; he measures in one glance how great, under certain circumstances, is the responsibility of the individual, and how he risks becoming petty by liberty which some social circles might be tempted to grant him."

"If," the author further says, "we can say that under certain circumstances I am not at liberty to spit in the street, . . . how can I claim the much more important right of disposing of my sexual energy as I like? Does that energy by a unique privilege escape the universal law of solidarity? Who does not see, on the contrary, that the sovereign importance of the function only increases the social reaction of the individual acts? Look at this young man and this girl who have just established that false union of which the reader knows the character; they are persuaded that the agreement concerns nobody but themselves. They shut themselves up in their independence, and pretend to believe that their intimate and secret action has no interest for society and is altogether beyond its control. A childish illusion! The

and yet his first experiences are enough to show him its painful complexity. It is in vain that unity is the dominating characteristic of our nature and our moral life; we feel within us various and contradictory impulses; in each of them we are conscious of ourselves, and yet everything proves to us that we must choose between them. You say, young man, that you wish to live your own life, to realize yourself; but what part of yourself do you wish to realize, we ask with the great pedagogue, Foerster? Which is the better part, that which has its seat in the centre of your intellectual force, or that which occupies the lowest, the sensual, part of your nature? If it is true that progress in the individual and in society consists in a growing spiritualization and in the ever more complete mastery of spirit over matter, the choice cannot be doubtful, but there must still be energy to act, and the undertaking is not an easy one. Perhaps you will reply: But I do not choose, I wish to realize my being in one harmonious and organized whole. Very well; but take care, this very resolution is a choice, for harmony is only established at the cost of strife. *Sterb und Werde*, die and become, said Goethe, and the words are but the echo of others spoken nineteen centuries ago by Christ, 'Amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'

" 'We wish to be men — an easy thing to say,' writes M. Gabriel Seailles, 'but the right turns into duty, stern duty, in which no one does not fail more or less; we wish to be free, we announce it with a menacing air; if we call liberty doing as we like, the slavery of instinct, we need not be so proud of it; if we are speaking of the true liberty, let us gird up our loins and prepare ourselves for the unending fight. We talk about our unity, our identity, our liberty, and proudly conclude that we are immortal sons of God. Alas! if we only try to seize this *Self*, it escapes our grasp, it resolves itself into a multitude of incoherent beings which deny each other, it is rent by contradictory desires which in turn

a habit contracted often through ignorance rather than perversity. The best safeguard consists in cultivating within oneself purity of thought and discipline of one's whole being.'"

M. Bureau adds to the foregoing the following from Dr. Escande :

"As to sexual desire, we assert, the intelligence and the will have absolute control over it. It is necessary to employ the term sexual *desire*, not *need*, for there is no question of a function, the non-accomplishment of which is incompatible with existence. Really it is not a need at all; but many men are persuaded that it is. The interpretation they give to the desire makes them look on cohabitation as absolutely necessary. Now we cannot look on the sexual act as resulting from senile and passive obedience to natural laws. We are, on the contrary, concerned with a voluntary act, following on a determination or an acquiescence, often premeditated and prepared for."

## VI

After having insisted on chastity before and during marriage and shown by overwhelming proof that not only is self-restraint not impossible, not harmful, but perfectly possible and wholly beneficial both to the mind and the body, M. Bureau devotes a chapter to the value and possibility of perpetual continence. The following opening paragraph is worth reproducing :

"In the first rank of these liberators, these heroes of the true sexual emancipation, it is only right to name the young men and women who, the better to devote themselves to the service of a great cause, choose to remain all their life in chastity, and renounce the joys of marriage. The reasons for their resolve vary according to circumstances; one feels it a duty to remain with an infirm father or mother; another takes the place, to orphaned brothers and sisters, of the departed parents; another desires to devote himself or herself entirely to the service of science or of art, of the poor or the sick,

blinds us to the realities of life. We are almost ashamed of chastity, and are in danger of looking upon self-imposed poverty as a crime in the face of the Western splendour that descends upon us from minute to minute through the cable and day to day through the steamers that discharge their cargo on our shores. But the West is not wholly what we see in India. Even as the South African Whites ill-judge us when they judge us through the Indian settlers, so shall we ill-judge the West through the human and the other Western cargo that delivers itself to us every day. There is in the West a small but inexhaustible reservoir of purity and strength which those who have eyes of penetration may see beneath the deceptive surface. Throughout the European desert there are oases from which those who will may drink the purest water of life. Chastity and voluntary poverty are adopted without brag, without bluster, and in all humility by hundreds of men and women, often for no other than the all-sufficing cause of service of some dear one or of the country. We often prate about spirituality as if it had nothing to do with the ordinary affairs of life and had been reserved for anchorites lost in the Himalayan forests or concealed in some inaccessible Himalayan cave. Spirituality that has no bearing on and produces no effect on everyday life is 'an airy nothing'. Let young men and women for whose sake *Young India* is written from week to week know that it is their duty, if they would purify the atmosphere about them and shed their weakness, to be and remain chaste and know too that it is not so difficult as they have been taught to imagine.

Let us further listen to M. Bureau "In proportion as it (modern sociology) follows the evolution of our manners, and as methodical study digs more deeply the soil of social realities, the better is the value perceived of the help which the 'practice of perpetual chastity brings to the great work of the discipline of the senses.'" "If marriage is the normal state of life for the immense majority of people, it cannot be that all can, or ought

conscience with regard to passing whims and sensual assaults. Celibacy is also a protection to marriage in the sense that its existence prevents married people from looking upon themselves in their mutual relations as mere slaves to obscure natural forces, and it leads them to take openly, in the face of nature, the position of free beings who are capable of mastery. Those who scoff at perpetual celibacy as unnatural or impossible do not know really what they are doing. They fail to see that the line of thought which makes them talk as they do must necessarily lead, by strict logic, to prostitution and polygamy. If the demand of nature is irresistible, how can a chaste life be required of married people? And lastly, they forget the great number of marriages in which, it may be for several months or years, or even for life, one of the spouses is condemned to a real celibacy by the sickness or other disability of the partner. For this reason alone, true monogamy rises or falls with the esteem that is paid to celibacy."

## VII

The chapter on perpetual continence is followed by chapters on the duty and indissolubility of marriage. Whilst the author contends that perpetual continence is the highest state, it is not possible for the multitude for whom marriage must be regarded as a duty. He shows that, if the function and limitations of marriage are rightly understood, there never can be any advocacy of contraceptives. It is the wrong moral training that has brought about the prevalent moral indiscipline. Having dealt with the opinion of 'advanced' writers ridiculing marriage the author says:

"Happily for future generations, this opinion of pseudo-moralists and of writers who are often utterly lacking in moral sense, and equally so sometimes in the real literary spirit, is very far from being that of the true psychologists and sociologists of our time; and in nothing is the rupture more complete between the noisy world of the press, the novel and the stage, and that

shown when they choose each other, and each is bound to choose only with full knowledge, after careful thought, the one with whom he believes he can assume the responsibilities of the new life he is entering. But as soon as the marriage has been accomplished and consummated, the act performed involves, far away and in all directions, incalculable consequences which extend infinitely beyond the two persons who have brought them about. These consequences may be unperceived, in a time of anarchic individualism such as ours, by the spouses themselves, but their importance is certified by the grave sufferings which come upon the whole body social as soon as the stability of the home is shaken, as soon as the variable caprice of the sensual appetite takes the place of the beneficent discipline of the positive monogamic union. To one who is conscious of these indefinitely extended repercussions and these subtle connections, it matters little to know that, since all human institutions are subject to the universal law of evolution, that of marriage must certainly, like all the rest, undergo in its turn necessary transformations, since there can be no doubt that progress in this direction can only take the form of eventually drawing more closely the marriage bond. The attacks now made on the rule of the indissolubility of marriage, when divorce is asked for by mutual consent, will only bring into more prominent relief the social value of a rule against which protest is made, and as the years roll by, this rule, which for some centuries, when its social value could not yet be appreciated, was simply a prescription of religious discipline, will appear more and more as a principle as beneficial to the individual as it is salutary for society at large.

"The rule of indissolubility is not an arbitrary adornment; on the contrary, it is bound up with the most delicate mechanism of the individual and collective social life; and since people talk about evolution, they should ask on what condition this indefinite progress of the race, which all agree to desire, is possible. Writes Foerster :  
'The deepening of the sense of responsibility, the train-

He quotes Auguste Comte : "Our hearts are so changeable that society must intervene to hold in check the vacillation and caprices which would otherwise drag down human existence to be nothing but a series of unworthy and pointless experiences."

"A fiction," writes Dr. Toulouse, "which often hinders the happiness of married people, is that the instinct of love is a tyrant and must be satisfied at any price. . . . Now the very characteristic quality of man, and the apparent end of his evolution, is an ever-growing independence of his appetites. The child learns to master his coarser needs, and the adult to overcome his passions. This scheme of all good upbringing is not chimerical, nor something outside practical life. For the end of our nature is precisely to be subject, in great degree, to the personal tendencies which constitute our will. What one shelters behind as 'temperament' is usually nothing but weakness. The man who is really strong knows how to use his powers at the right time."

## VIII

It is now time to conclude this series of articles. It is not necessary to pursue M. Bureau in his examination of the doctrine of Malthus who startled his generation by his theory of overpopulation and his advocacy of birth control if the human species was not to be extinct. Malthus, however, advocated continence, whereas Neo-Malthusianism advocates not restraint but the use of chemical and mechanical means to avoid the consequences of animal indulgence. M. Bureau heartily accepts the doctrine of birth control by moral means, *i. e.*, self-restraint, and, as we have seen, rejects and vigorously condemns the use of chemical or mechanical means. The author then examines the condition of the working classes and the proportion of births among them, and finally closes the book by examining the means of checking the practice of grossest immoralities under the name of individual

full vigour of life desiring intercourse and yet wishing to avoid the burden of children are, I make bold to say, rare in this ocean of Indian humanity. Let them not parade their cases to justify and advocate a practice that in India, if it became general, is bound to ruin the youth of the country. A highly artificial education has robbed the nation's youth of physical and mental vigour. We are offspring in many cases of child marriages. Our disregard of the laws of health and sanitation has undermined our bodies. Our wrong and deficient dietary composed of corroding spices has produced a collapse of the digestive apparatus. We need, not lessons in the use of contraceptives and helps to our being able to satisfy our animal appetite, but continuous lessons to restrain that appetite, in many cases even to the extent of absolute continence. We need to be taught by precept and example that continence is perfectly possible and imperatively necessary if we are not to remain mentally and physically weak. We need to be told from the housetop that if we will not be a nation of manikins, we must conserve and add to the limited vital energy we are daily dissipating. Our young widows need to be told not to sin secretly but come out boldly and openly to demand marriage which is their right as much as that of young widowers. We need to cultivate public opinion that shall make child marriages impossible. The vacillation, and the disinclination to do hard and sustained work, the physical inability to perform strenuous labours, collapses of enterprises brilliantly begun, the want of originality, one notices so often, are due largely to excessive indulgence. I hope young men do not deceive themselves into the belief that when there is no procreation the mere indulgence does not matter, does not weaken. Indeed the sexual act, with the unnatural safeguard against procreation, is likely to be far more exhausting than such act performed with a full sense of the responsibility attached to it.

'The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell or heaven.'

next generation and is carried on at the expense of internal reproduction, bringing disease, death and more in its train."

No one who knows anything of Hindu philosophy can have difficulty in following this paragraph from Mr. Hare's essay :

"The process of regeneration is not and cannot be mechanistic in character, but like the primitive fission is vitalistic. That is to say, it exhibits intelligence and will. To suppose that life separates, differentiates and segregates by a process that is purely mechanistic is inconceivable. True, these fundamental processes are so far removed from our present consciousness as to seem to be uncontrolled by the human or animal will. But a moment's reflection will show, that just as the will of the fully developed human being directs his external movements and actions in accordance with the guidance of the intellect, — this, indeed being its function, — so the earlier processes of the gradual organization of the body must, within the limits provided by environment, be allowed to be directed by a kind of will guided by a kind of intelligence. This is now known to psychologists as 'the unconscious'. It is a part of our self, disconnected from our normal daily thinking, but intensely awake and alert in regard to its own functions — so much so that it never for a moment subsides into sleep as the consciousness does."

Who can measure the almost irreparable harm done to the unconscious and more permanent part of our being by the sexual act indulged in for its own sake? 'The nemesis of reproduction is death. The sexual act is essentially katabolic (or a movement towards death) in the male, and in parturition of the offspring it is katabolic for the female.' Hence the writer contends: "Virility, vitality and immunity from disease are the normal lot of nearly or quite continent persons." "Withdrawal of germ cells from their upward regenerative course for generative or merely indulgent purposes deprives the organs of their

## BIRTH CONTROL\*

It is not without the greatest hesitation and reluctance that I approach this subject. The question of using artificial methods for birth control has been referred to me by correspondents ever since my return to India. Though I have answered them personally, I have never hitherto dealt with the subject publicly. My attention was drawn to the subject, now thirtyfive years ago, when I was a student in England. There was then a hot controversy raging between a purist who would not countenance anything but natural means and a doctor who advocated artificial means. It was at that early time in my life that I became, after leanings for a brief period towards artificial means, a convinced opponent of them. I now observe that in some Hindi papers the methods are described in a revoltingly open manner which shocks one's sense of decency. I observe, too, that one writer does not hesitate to cite my name as among the supporters of artificial methods of birth control. I cannot recall a single occasion when I spoke or wrote in favour of such methods. I have seen also two distinguished names having been used in support. I hesitate to publish them without reference to their owners.

There can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth control. But the only method handed down from ages past is self-control or *brahmacharya*. It is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it. And medical men will earn the gratitude of mankind, if instead of devising artificial means of birth control they will find out the means of self-control. The union is meant not for pleasure but for bringing forth progeny. And union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent.

Artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless. And

---

\*Reprinted from *Young India*, March 12, 1925

## SOME ARGUMENTS CONSIDERED\*

My article on birth control has, as was to be expected, given rise to energetic correspondence in favour of artificial methods. I select three typical letters. There is a fourth letter which is largely theological. I therefore omit it. Here is one of the three letters:

"I have read your article on 'birth control' with great interest. The subject is, at present, exercising the minds of many educated men. Last year, we had long and heated debates. They proved at least this much, that young men are acutely interested in this problem, that there is a great deal of prudery and prejudice about it, that in a free and open discussion one's sense of 'decency' is rarely shocked. Your article has set me thinking afresh, and I appeal to you for some more light, to dispel many doubts that arise in my mind.

"I agree that there can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth control. I further agree that '*brahmacharya*' is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it. But I ask whether the problem is not one of 'birth control' than of 'self-control'. If so, let us see if self-control is a feasible method of birth control for the average person.

"I believe that this problem can be examined from two different points of view, that of the individual and that of society. It is the duty of each individual to restrain his carnal passions, and thus evolve his spiritual strength. At all times, there are a few such persons, of great moral fibre, who set up this noble standard before themselves, and will follow no other. But I wonder whether they have any perception of the problem of birth control, which we are intent on solving. A *sannyasi* is out for salvation, but not for birth control.

"But can this method solve an economic, social, and political question of the greatest importance to the vast majority of people within a reasonable period of time? It presses for solution on every thinking and prudent *grihastha* even now. How many children can one feed, clothe, educate, and settle in life is a question which brooks no delay. Knowing human nature as you do, can you reasonably expect large numbers completely to abstain from sexual pleasure, after the need for progeny has been satisfied? But I believe you would permit a rational and temperate exercise of the sexual instinct, as is recommended by our *smritikas*. The vast majority may be asked neither to indulge the

---

\*Reprinted from *Young India*, April 2, 1925

that even a moderate exercise of one's appetite, without desire for progeny, is immoral. Moreover I ask if any one is ever restrained by the fear of progeny, the consequences of one's acts. In any case, many are impelled to seek the advice of quacks, reckless of their health and happiness. How many abortions have not been caused while 'seeking to escape the consequences of one's acts'? But, even if 'fear proved an effective restraint, the 'moral' results would be poor indeed. Besides, by what system of justice should the sins of parents be visited upon the heads of their progeny and the imprudence of individuals hurt society? It is true that 'Nature is relentless, and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws.' But why assume that the use of artificial methods is *such a violation*? None calls the use of artificial teeth, eyes and limbs as 'unnatural'. That alone is unnatural which does not secure our well-being. I do not believe that mankind is by nature vicious, and that the use of these methods will make it worse. There is enough of licence even now, not even India excepted. It is as easy to prove that this new power will be properly used as that it may be abused. But let us recognize that man is on the point of winning this tremendous power over Nature, and that we can ignore it only at our cost. Wisdom lies in controlling it, not in shunning it. Some of the noblest workers seek the propagation of these methods, not for indulgence, but to help men to self-control.

"Let us also not forget that woman and her needs have been ignored too long. She means to have her say in this matter, for she refuses to allow man to treat her body as 'tilth for offspring'. The strain of modern civilization is too great to permit her to rear a large family with all the drudgery and worry it means. Dr. Marie Stopes and Miss Ellen Key would never seek the 'nervous prostration' of woman. The methods they suggest can be made effective chiefly by women, and are more likely to evolve wise motherhood than reckless indulgence. In any case there are circumstances when a lesser evil may avoid a greater. There are dangerous diseases which must be avoided even at the cost of 'nervous prostration'. There are natural periods of lactation when union is unavoidable but injurious if fruitful. There are women, otherwise healthy, who can bear children only at a serious risk to their lives.

"I neither wish nor expect you to turn into a propagandist of birth control. You are at your best in keeping the light of Truth and Chastity burning in its purity and holding it before mortals who seek it. But a prudent parent will seek that light more than an imprudent one. He who realizes the need of birth control may easily evolve self control. The present licence,

control in India from the standpoint of the present political condition of the country.

I do suggest that men must cease to indulge their animal passions after the need for progeny has ceased. The remedy of self-control can be made popular and effective. It has never had a trial with the educated class. That class has not yet, thanks to the joint-family system, felt the pressure. Those that have, have not given a thought to the moral issues involved in the question. Save for stray lectures on *Brahmacharya* no systematic propaganda has been carried on for advocating self-control for the definite purpose of limiting progeny. On the contrary the superstition of a larger family being an auspicious thing and therefore desirable still persists. Religious teachers do not generally teach that restriction of progeny in given circumstances is as much a religious obligation as procreation may be under certain other circumstances.

I am afraid that advocates of birth control take it for granted that indulgence in animal passion is a necessity of life and in itself a desirable thing. The solicitude shown for the fair sex is most pathetic. In my opinion it is an insult to the fair sex to put up her case in support of birth control by artificial methods. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded her for his lust, and artificial methods, no matter how well-meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her. I know that there are modern women who advocate these methods. But I have little doubt that the vast majority of women will reject them as inconsistent with their dignity. If man means well by her, let him exercise control over himself. It is not she who tempts. In reality man being the aggressor is the real culprit and the tempter.

I urge the advocates of artificial methods to consider the consequences. Any large use of the methods is likely to result in the dissolution of the marriage bond and in free love. If a man may indulge in animal passion for the sake of it, what is he to do whilst he is, say, away from his home for any length of time, or when he

be judged moral or immoral according to their results and not by *a priori* assumptions as to their morality.

"The method you propose was also advised by Malthus, but is absolutely impracticable except for a few selected individuals like you. What is the use of advocating methods which cannot be practised? The benefits of *Brahmacharaya* have been greatly exaggerated. Modern medical authorities (I mean those who have no religious prejudices) think that it is positively harmful beyond the age of 22 or so. It is religious prejudice which makes you think that sexual union is a sin except for procreation. As nobody can guarantee the result beforehand, you condemn everybody either to complete abstinence or to take the chance of sinning. Physiology does not teach this, and it is now too late in the day to ask people to ignore science in favour of dogma."

This writer has taken up an uncompromising attitude. I hope I have given enough illustrations to show that self-restraint and not indulgence must be regarded as the law of life, if we are to accept and retain the sanctity of the marriage tie. I have not begged the question, for I do contend that artificial methods, however proper they may be, are harmful. They are harmful not perhaps in themselves but because they increase the appetite which grows with every feed. The mind that is so tuned as to regard indulgence not only lawful but even desirable will simply feed itself on the indulgence, and will at last become so weak as to lose all strength of will. I do maintain that every act of indulgence means loss of precious vitality so needful to keep a man or woman strong in body, mind and soul. Though I have now mentioned the soul, I have purposely eliminated it from the discussion which is intended merely to combat the arguments advanced by my correspondents who seem to disregard its existence. The tuition that is needed for much married and enervated India is not that of indulgence with artificial means but complete restraint, if only for the sake of regaining lost vitality. Let the immoral medicines whose advertisements disfigure our press be a warning to the advocates of birth control. It is not prudery or false modesty which restrains me from discussing the subject. The restraining force is the certain knowledge that the devitalized and enervated

I must confess my ignorance of the facts about America and Japan. Why Japan is advocating birth control I do not know. If the writer's facts are correct and if birth control by artificial methods is at all general in Japan, I make bold to say that this fine nation is rushing headlong to its moral ruin.

I may be wholly wrong. My conclusions may be based on false data. But the advocates of artificial methods have need to be patient. They have no data at all except the modern examples. Surely it is too early to predict anything with any degree of certainty of a system of control which on the face of it seems to be repugnant to the moral sense of mankind. It is easy enough to trifle with youthful nature. It will be difficult to undo the evil effects of such trifling.

## 4

## ON THE NECESSITY OF CONTINENCE\*

I would request those who have carefully read through the book so far to peruse this chapter with even greater care, and ponder well over its subject matter. There are still several more chapters to be written, and they will, of course, be found useful in their own way. But no other chapter is nearly as important as this. As I have already said, there is not a single matter mentioned in this book which is not based on my personal experience, or which I do not believe to be strictly true.

Many are the keys to health, and they are all quite essential; but one thing needful, above all others, is *Brahmacharya*. Pure air, pure water, and wholesome food certainly contribute to health. But how can we be healthy if we expend all the health that we acquire? How can we help being paupers if we spend all the money that we earn? There can be no doubt that men and women can never be virile or strong unless they observe true *Brahmacharya*.

---

\* Translation of a chapter in the author's Gujarati book on health (Part I, chapter IX).

alone can it be said that they have conserved their health.

We hardly realize the fact that incontinence is the root cause of most of the vanity, anger, fear, and jealousy in the world. If our mind is not under our control, if we behave once or oftener every day more foolishly than even little children, what sins may we not commit consciously or unconsciously? How can we pause to think of the consequences of our actions, however vile or sinful they may be?

But you may ask, 'Who has ever seen a true *Brahmachari* in this sense? If all men should turn *Brahmacharis*, would not humanity be extinct and the whole world go to rack and ruin?' We will leave aside the religious aspect of this question and discuss it simply from the secular point of view. To my mind, these questions only betray our timidity and worse. We have not the strength of will to observe *Brahmacharya*, and therefore set about finding pretexts for evading our duty. The race of true *Brahmacharis* is by no means extinct; but if they were commonly to be met with, of what value would *Brahmacharya* be? Thousands of hardy labourers have to go and dig deep into the bowels of the earth in search of diamonds, and at length they get perhaps merely a handful of them out of heaps and heaps of rock. How much greater, then, should be the labour involved in the discovery of the infinitely more precious diamond of a *Brahmachari*? If the observance of *Brahmacharya* should mean the end of the world, that is none of our business. Are we God that we should be so anxious about its future? He who created it will surely see to its preservation. We need not trouble to enquire whether other people practise *Brahmacharya* or not. When we enter a trade or profession, do we ever pause to consider what the fate of the world would be if all men were to do likewise? The true *Brahmachari* will, in the long run, discover for himself answers to such questions.

But how can men engrossed in the cares of the material world put these ideas into practice? What about those who are married? What shall they do

Is it a matter for joy that mere boys and girls should have children ? Is it not rather a curse ? We all know that the premature fruit of a too young plant weakens the parent, and so we try all means of delaying the appearance of fruit. But we sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God when a child is born of a boy father and a girl mother ! Could anything be more dreadful ? Do we think that the world is going to be saved by the countless swarms of such impotent children endlessly multiplying in India or elsewhere ? Verily, we are, in this respect, far worse than even the lower animals ; for in their case the male and the female are brought together solely with the object of breeding from them. Man and woman should regard it a sacred duty to keep apart from the moment of conception up to the time when the child is weaned. But we go on with our fatal merry-making blissfully forgetful of that sacred obligation. This almost incurable disease enfeebles our mind and leads us to an early grave, after making us drag a miserable existence for a short while. Married people should understand the true function of marriage, and should not violate *Brahmacharya* except with a view to progeny.

But this is so difficult under our present conditions of life. Our diet, our ways of life, our common talk, and our environments are all equally calculated to rouse animal passions ; and sensuality is like a poison eating into our vitals. Some people may doubt the possibility of our being able to free ourselves from this bondage. This book is written not for those who go about with such doubting of heart, but only for those who are really in earnest, and who have the courage to take active steps for self-improvement. Those who are quite content with their present abject condition will find this tedious even to read ; but I hope it will be of some service to those who have realized and are disgusted with their own miserable plight.

From all that has been said, it follows that those who are still unmarried should try to remain so ; but if

As has already been pointed out, the preservation of our vitality is impossible without pure air, pure water, pure and wholesome food, as well as pure thoughts. So vital indeed is the relation between health and morals that we can never be perfectly healthy unless we lead a clean life. The earnest man, who, forgetting the errors of the past, begins to live a life of purity, will be able to reap the fruit of it straightaway. Those who practise true *Brahmacharya* even for a short period will see how their body and mind improve steadily in strength and power, and they will not at any cost be willing to part with this treasure. I have myself been guilty of lapses even after having fully understood the value of *Brahmacharya*, and have of course paid dearly for it. I am filled with shame and remorse when I think of the terrible contrast between my condition before and after these lapses. (But from the errors of the past I have now learnt to preserve this treasure intact, and I fully hope, with God's grace, to continue to preserve it in the future; for I have, in my own person, experienced the inestimable benefits of *Brahmacharya* I was married early, and had become the father of children as a mere youth. When, at length, I awoke to the reality of my situation, I found that I was steeped in ignorance about the fundamental laws of our being. I shall consider myself amply rewarded for writing this chapter, if at least a single reader takes a warning from my failings and experiences, and profits thereby. Many people have told me — and I also believe it — that I am full of energy and enthusiasm, and that I am by no means weak in mind; some even accuse me of strength bordering on obstinacy. Nevertheless there is still bodily and mental ill health as a legacy of the past. And yet, when compared with my friends, I may call myself healthy and strong. If even after twenty years of sensual enjoyment, I have been able to reach this state, how much better off should I have been if I had kept myself pure during those twenty years as well? It is my full conviction, that if only I had lived a life of unbroken

work during the day. They should read such books as fill them with noble thoughts and meditate over the lives of great men, and live in the constant realization of the fact that sensual enjoyment is the root of much misery. Whenever they feel a craving for sexual indulgence, they should bathe in cold water, so that the heat of passion may be cooled down, and be refined into the energy of virtuous activity. This is a difficult thing to do, but we have been born to wrestle with difficulties and conquer them; and he who has not the will to do so can never enjoy the supreme blessing of true health.

## 5

## SELF-CONTROL\*

I have been asked to say a few words about *Brahmacharya*. There are some subjects which I occasionally discuss in the pages of *Navajvan*, but which I rarely deal with in my speeches. *Brahmacharya* is one of these. I hardly ever speak about it, as I know that it cannot be explained by words and is a very difficult subject. You wish me to speak about *Brahmacharya* in the general restricted acceptance of the term, not about *Brahmacharya* with the wider significance of control of all the senses. Even the observance of *Brahmacharya* as ordinarily understood is described in the *Shastras* as a hard task. This is true in the main, but I may be permitted to make a few observations which point the other way. *Brahmacharya* appears to be difficult because we do not control the other senses. Take for example the organ of taste which leads the rest. *Brahmacharya* will come easy to anyone who controls his palate. Zoologists tell us that *Brahmacharya* is observed by the lower animals, as for instance cattle, to a greater extent than by human beings, and this is a fact. The reason is that cattle have perfect control over the palate,

\* Translation by V. G. Desai of a Gujarati speech before the Seva Samaj, Bhadrin, reported in *Navajvan*, 26th February, 1925.

their beauty. Clothes are meant just to cover the body, protect it against heat and cold, not to beautify it. If a child is trembling with cold, we must send him to the fireside to warm himself or out into the street for a run, or into the field for work. It is only thus that we can help him to build a splendid constitution. By keeping the child confined in the house we impart a false warmth to his body. By pampering his body we only succeed in destroying it.

So much for the clothes. Then again, the light conversation carried on in the house creates a very harmful impression on the child's mind. Elders talk of getting him married. The things which he sees around him also tend to corrupt him. The wonder is that we have not sunk to the lowest depths of barbarism. Restraint is observed in spite of conditions which render it well-nigh impossible. A gracious Providence has so arranged things that man is saved in spite of himself. If we remove all these obstacles in the way of *Brahmacharya*, it not only becomes possible but also easy to observe..

We are thus weak and yet we have to compete with a world of men physically stronger than ourselves. There are two ways of doing this : the one godly, and the other satanic. The satanic way is to adopt all measures right or wrong for developing the body, such as beef-eating etc. A friend of my childhood used to say that we must take meat, and that otherwise we could not develop our physique so as to meet the English on equal terms. Beef-eating became the vogue in Japan when the time came for her to face other nations. We must follow in her wake if we wish to build our bodies in the satanic way.

(But if we build up our bodies in the godly way, the only means at our disposal is *Brahmacharya*. I pity myself when people call me a *nishithika Brahmachari*. How could such description apply to one who, like me, is married and has children ? A *nishithika Brahmachari* would never suffer from fever, headache, cough or appendicitis, as I have suffered. Medical men say that

## BRAHMACHARYA\*

It is not easy to write on this subject. But my own experience being fairly extensive I am always desirous of placing some of its results before the reader. Some letters which I have received have reinforced this desire.

A correspondent asks :

"What is *Brahmacharya* ? Is it possible to observe it in its perfection ? If yes, have you attained that state ?"

"*Brahmacharya* properly and fully understood means search after Brahma. As Brahma is present in every one of us, we must seek for it within with the help of meditation and consequent realization. Realization is impossible without complete control of all the senses. Therefore *Brahmacharya* signifies control of all the senses at all times and at all places in thought, word and deed."

Perfect *Brahmacharis*, men or women, are perfectly sinless. They are therefore near to God. They are like God.

I have no doubt that such perfect observance of *Brahmacharya* is possible. I regret to say that I have not attained such perfection, although my effort in that direction is ceaseless and I have not given up hope of attaining it in this very life.

I am on my guard when awake. I have acquired control over the body. I am also fairly restrained in speech. But as regards thoughts there still remains much for me to do. When I wish to concentrate my thoughts upon a particular subject, I am disturbed by other thoughts too and thus there is a conflict between them. Yet during waking hours I am able to prevent their collision. I may be said to have reached a state where I am free from unclean thoughts. But I cannot exercise an equal control over my thoughts in sleep. In sleep all manner of thoughts enter my mind, and I

---

\*Translation by Valji Govindji Desai of an article in *Nirajivan*, 25th May, 1924.

equal potentialities; only some have developed their powers while others have them in a dormant condition. These latter too will have a like experience, if only they try.

Thus far I have dealt with *Brahmacharya* in its wider significance. *Brahmacharya* in the popular or current acceptance of the term means control of animal passion in thought, word and deed. This meaning is also correct as the control of passion has been held to be very difficult. The same stress has not been laid upon the control of the palate, and hence the control of passion has grown more difficult and almost impossible. Medical men believe that passion is stronger in a body worn out by disease, and therefore *Brahmacharya* appears hard to our enervated people.

I have spoken above of a weak but healthy body. Let no one therefore run away with the idea that we should neglect physical culture. I have expounded the highest form of *Brahmacharya* in my broken language which may perhaps be misunderstood. One who wishes to attain perfect control of all the senses must be prepared in the end to welcome weakness of body. All desire for bodily strength vanishes when there is no longer any attachment for the body.

But the body of a *Brahmachari* who has conquered animal passion must be very strong and full of lustre. Even this restricted *Brahmacharya* is a wonderful thing. One who is free from carnal thoughts even in his dreams is worthy of the world's adoration. It is clear that control of the other senses is an easy thing for him.

Another friend writes :

"My condition is pitiable. The same vicious thoughts disturb me day and night, in the office, on the road, when I am reading or working or even praying. How am I to control my thoughts? How can I look upon womankind as upon my own mother? How can nothing but the purest affection emanate from the eyes? How can I eradicate wicked thoughts? I have your article on *Brahmacharya* before me, but it seems I cannot profit by it at all."

This is indeed heart-rending. Many of us are in a like predicament. But so long as the mind is up against

seeker will realize this at once. It should, however, be remembered that the *mantra* is not to be repeated parrotlike. One should pour one's soul into it. The parrot repeats such *mantras* mechanically; we must repeat them intelligently in the hope of driving out undesirable thoughts and with full faith in the power of the *mantras* to assist us to do so.

## 7

## TRUTH v. BRAHMACHARYA\*

A friend writes to Mahadev Desai :

"You will remember that in an article on *Brahmacharya* published in *Navajwan* some time ago, translated in *Young India* by you, Gandhiji admitted that he still had bad dreams. The moment I read it I felt that such admissions could have no wholesome effect, and I came to know later that my fear was justified.

"During our sojourn in England my friends and I kept our character unscathed in spite of temptations. We remained absolutely free from wine, woman and meat. But on reading Gandhiji's article one of the friends exclaimed to me in despair : 'If such is the case with Gandhiji even after his herculean efforts, where are we? It is useless to attempt to observe *Brahmacharya*. Gandhiji's confession has entirely changed my point of view. Take me to be lost from today.' Not without some hesitation I tried to reason with him, 'If the way is so difficult for men like Gandhiji, it is much more so for us, and we should therefore redouble our effort,' — the way Gandhiji or you would argue. But it was all in vain. A character that had been spotless so long was thus bespattered with mire. What would Gandhiji or you say, if someone were to hold Gandhiji responsible for this fall ?

"As long as I had only one such instance in mind, I did not write to you. You would possibly have put me off by saying that it was an exceptional case. But there were more such instances, and my fear has been more than justified.

I know that there are certain things which are quite easy for Gandhiji to achieve, and which are impossible for me. But by the grace of God, I can say that something which may be impossible for even Gandhiji may be possible for me. It is this consciousness or pride that has saved me from a fall, though the admission above-mentioned has completely disturbed my sense of security.

Why argue that, because a man like me could not escape unclean thoughts, there is no hope for the rest? Why not rather argue that, if a Gandhi, who was once given to lust, can today live as friend and brother to his wife and can look upon the fairest damsel as his sister or daughter, there is hope for the lowliest and the lost? If God was merciful to one who was so full of lust, certainly all the rest would have His mercy too.

The friends of the correspondent who were put back because of a knowledge of my imperfections had never gone forward at all. It was a false virtue that fell at the first blast. The truth and observance of *Brahmacharya* and similar eternal principles do not depend on persons imperfect as myself. They rest on the sure foundations of the penance of the many who strove for them and live them in their fulness. When I have the fitness to stand alongside those perfect beings, there will be much more determination and force in my language than today. He whose thoughts do not wander and think evil, whose sleep knows no dreams and who can be wide awake even whilst asleep, is truly healthy. He does not need to take quinine. His incorruptible blood will have the inherent virtue of resisting all infection. It is for such a perfectly healthy state of body, mind and spirit that I am striving. This knows no defeat or failure. I invite the correspondent, his friends of little faith, and others to join me in that striving, and I wish that they may go forward even like the correspondent quicker than I. Let my example inspire those who are behind me with more confidence. All that I have achieved has been in spite of my weakness, in spite of my liability to passion, and because of my ceaseless striving and infinite faith in God's grace.

No one need therefore despair. My Mahatmaship is worthless. It is due to my outward activities, due to my politics which is the least part of me and is therefore evanescent. What is of abiding worth is my insistence on truth, non-violence and *Brahmacharya*, which is the

on my work, if I did not regard the whole of womankind as sisters, daughters or mothers. If I looked at them with lustful eyes, it would be the surest way to perdition.

Procreation is a natural phenomenon indeed, but within specific limits. A transgression of those limits imperils womankind, emasculates the race, induces disease, puts a premium on vice, and makes the world ungodly. A man in the grip of the sensual desire is a man without moorings. If such a one were to guide society, to flood it with his writings, and men were to be swayed by them, where would society be? And yet we have that very thing happening today. Supposing a moth whirling round a light were to record the moments of its fleeting joy and we were to imitate it, regarding it as an example, where would we be? No, I must declare with all the power I can command that sensual attraction even between husband and wife is unnatural. Marriage is meant to cleanse the hearts of the couple of sordid passion and take them nearer to God. Lustless love between husband and wife is not impossible. Man is not a brute. He had risen to a higher state after countless births in the brute creation. He is born to stand, not to walk on all fours or crawl. Bestiality is as far removed from manhood as matter from spirit.)

In conclusion I shall summarize the means to its attainment.

The first step is the realization of its necessity.

The next is gradual control of the senses. A *Brahmachari* must needs control his palate. He must eat to live, and not for enjoyment. He must see only clean things and close his eyes before anything unclean. It is thus a sign of polite breeding to walk with one's eyes towards the ground and not wandering about from object to object. A *Brahmachari* will likewise hear nothing obscene or unclean, smell no strong, stimulating thing. The smell of clean earth is far sweeter than the fragrance of artificial scents and essences. Let the aspirant to *Brahmacharya* also keep his hands and feet engaged in all the waking hours in healthful activity. Let him also fast occasionally!

necessary for reaching spiritual perfection. And the nation that does not possess such men is the poorer for the want. But my purpose is to plead for *Brahmacharya* as a temporary necessity in the present stage of national evolution.

We have more than an ordinary share of disease, famines and pauperism — even starvation among millions. We are being ground down under slavery in such a subtle manner that many of us refuse even to recognize it as such, and mistake our state as one of progressive freedom in spite of the triple curse of economic, mental and moral drain. The ever-growing military expenditure, the injurious fiscal policy purposely designed to benefit Lancashire and other British interests, and the extravagant manner of running the various departments of the State constitute a tax on India which has deepened her poverty and reduced her capacity for withstanding diseases. The manner of administration has, in Gokhale's words, stunted national growth so much that the tallest of us have to bend. India was even made to crawl on her belly in Amritsar. The studied insult of the Punjab and the refusal to apologize for the insolent breach of the pledged word to Indian Mussalmans are the most recent examples of the moral drain. They hurt the very soul within us. The process of emasculation would be complete, if we submitted to those two wrongs.

Is it right for us who know the situation to bring forth children in an atmosphere so debasing as I have described? We only multiply slaves and weaklings, if we continue the process of procreation whilst we feel and remain helpless, diseased and famine-stricken. Not till India has become a free nation, able to withstand avoidable starvation, well able to feed herself in times of famine, possessing the knowledge to deal with malaria, cholera, influenza and other epidemics, have we the right to bring forth progeny. I must not conceal from the reader the sorrow I feel when I hear of births in this land. I must confess that for years I have contemplated with satisfaction the prospect of suspending procreation by voluntary self-denial. India is today ill-equipped

wished well to the country and wanted to see India become a nation of strong and handsome full-formed men and women, would practise perfect self-restraint and cease to procreate for the time being. I tender this advice even to the newly married. It is easier not to do a thing at all than to cease doing it, even as it is easier for a life abstainer to remain teetotaler than for a drunkard or even a temperate man to abstain. To remain erect is infinitely easier than to rise from a fall. It is wrong to say that continence can be safely preached only to the satiated. There is hardly any meaning, either, in preaching continence to an enfeebled person. And my point is that whether we are young or old, satiated or not, it is our duty at the present moment to suspend bringing forth heirs to our slavery.

May I point out to parents that they ought not to fall into the argumentative trap of the rights of partners? Consent is required for indulgence, never for restraint; this is an obvious truth.

When we are engaged in a death grip with a powerful government, we shall need all the strength, physical, material, moral and spiritual. We cannot gain it unless we husband the one thing which we must prize above everything else. Without this personal purity of life, we must remain a nation of slaves. Let us not deceive ourselves by imagining that, because we consider the system of government to be corrupt, Englishmen are to be despised as competitors in a race for personal virtue. Without making any spiritual parade of the fundamental virtues, they practise them at least physically in an abundant measure. Among those who are engaged in the political life of the country there are more celibates and spinsters than among us. Spinsters among us are practically unknown, except the nuns who leave no impression on the political life of the country, whereas in Europe thousands claim celibacy as a common virtue.

I now place before the reader a few simple rules which are based on the experience not only of myself, but of many of my associates :

## ABOLISH MARRIAGE |\*

A correspondent, whom I know well, raises an issue. I take it for purely academic interest, because I know the views he has set forth are not his. "Is not our present-day morality unnatural?" he asks. "If it was natural, it should have been the same everywhere in all ages; but every race and community seem to have its own peculiar marriage laws, and in enforcing them men have made themselves worse than beasts. For diseases which are unknown amongst animals are quite common amongst men; infanticide, abortions, child-marriages, which are impossible in the brute creation, are the curse of the society that holds up marriage as a sacrament, and no end of evil results have sprung from what we uphold as laws of morality. And the miserable condition of Hindu widows—what is it due to, but to the existing marriage laws? Why not go back to nature, and take a leaf out of the book of the brute creation?"

I do not know whether the advocates of free love in the West resort to the argument summarized above or have any stronger reasons to put forth, but I am sure that the tendency to regard the marriage bond as barbarous is distinctly Western. If the argument is also borrowed from the West, there is no difficulty about meeting it.

It is a mistake to institute a comparison between man and the brute, and it is this comparison that vitiates the whole argument. For man is higher than the brute in his moral instincts and moral institutions. The law of nature as applied to the one is different from the law of nature as applied to the other. Man has reason, discrimination, and free will such as it is. The brute has no such thing. It is not a free agent, and knows no distinction between virtue and vice, good and evil. Man,

---

\* A condensed translation from *Navaajvan*, reprinted from *Young India*, June 3, 1928

which is opposed to religion and morality, and hence deserves to be abolished. I submit that marriage is a fence that protects religion. If the fence were to be destroyed, religion would go to pieces. The foundation of religion is restraint, and marriage is nothing but restraint. The man who knows no restraint has no hope of self-realization. I confess it may be difficult to prove the necessity of restraint to an atheist or a materialist. But he who knows the perishable nature of flesh from the imperishable nature of the spirit instinctively knows that self-realization is impossible without self-discipline and self-restraint. The body may either be a playground of passion, or a temple of self-realization. If it is the latter, there is no room there for libertinism. The spirit needs must curb the flesh every moment.

Woman will be the apple of discord where the marriage bond is loose, where there is no observance of the law of restraint. If men were as unrestricted as the brutes, they would straightway take the road to destruction. I am firmly of opinion that all the evils that the correspondent complains of can be eradicated not by abolishing marriage but by a systematic understanding and observance of the law of marriage.

I agree that, whereas amongst some communities marriage is permitted amongst very near relations, it is prohibited among other communities; that whereas some communities forbid polygamy, some permit it. Whilst one would wish that there was a uniform moral law accepted by all communities, the diversity does not point to the necessity of abolishing all restraint. As we grow wise in experience, our morality will gain uniformity. Even today the moral sense of the world holds up monogamy as the highest ideal, and no religion makes polygamy obligatory. The ideal remains unaffected by the relaxation of practice according to time and place.

I need not reiterate my views regarding remarriage of widows, as I consider remarriage of virgin widows not only desirable but the bounden duty of all parents who happen to have such widowed daughters.

which is opposed to religion and morality, and hence deserves to be abolished. I submit that marriage is a fence that protects religion. If the fence were to be destroyed, religion would go to pieces. The foundation of religion is restraint, and marriage is nothing but restraint. The man who knows no restraint has no hope of self-realization. I confess it may be difficult to prove the necessity of restraint to an atheist or a materialist. But he who knows the perishable nature of flesh from the imperishable nature of the spirit instinctively knows that self-realization is impossible without self-discipline and self-restraint. The body may either be a playground of passion, or a temple of self-realization. If it is the latter, there is no room there for libertinism. The spirit needs must curb the flesh every moment.

Woman will be the apple of discord where the marriage bond is loose, where there is no observance of the law of restraint. If men were as unrestricted as the brutes, they would straightway take the road to destruction. I am firmly of opinion that all the evils that the correspondent complains of can be eradicated not by abolishing marriage but by a systematic understanding and observance of the law of marriage.

I agree that, whereas amongst some communities marriage is permitted amongst very near relations, it is prohibited among other communities; that whereas some communities forbid polygamy, some permit it. Whilst one would wish that there was a uniform moral law accepted by all communities, the diversity does not point to the necessity of abolishing all restraint. As we grow wise in experience, our morality will gain uniformity. Even today the moral sense of the world holds up monogamy as the highest ideal, and no religion makes polygamy obligatory. The ideal remains unaffected by the relaxation of practice according to time and place.

I need not reiterate my views regarding remarriage of widows, as I consider remarriage of virgin widows not only desirable but the bounden duty of all parents who happen to have such widowed daughters.

It must be so, as it gives a strength to body and mind such as no other process does with equal effect. Drugs and mechanical contrivances may keep the body in a tolerable condition, but they sap the mind and make it too weak to resist the play of a multitude of passions which like so many deadly foes surround every human being.

Too often do we expect results in spite of practices which are calculated to retard, if not to defeat, them. The common mode of life is shaped to minister to our passions. Our food, our literature, our amusements, our business hours are all regulated so as to excite and feed our animal passions. The vast majority of us want to marry, to have children and generally to enjoy ourselves, be it ever so moderately. It will be so more or less to the end of time.

But there are, as there always have been, exceptions to the general rule. Men have wanted to live a life wholly dedicated to the service of humanity, which is the same thing as saying to God. They will not divide their time between the rearing of a special family and the tending of the general human family. Necessarily such men and women cannot afford to live the general life which is designed to promote the special, individual interest. Those who will be celibates for the sake of God need to renounce the laxities of life, and find their enjoyment in its austere rigours. They may be 'in the world' but not 'of it'. Their food, their business, their hours of business, their recreations, their literature, their outlook upon life must, therefore, be different from the general.

It is now time to inquire whether the correspondent and his friend *desired* to live the life of complete abstinence and whether they modelled it accordingly. If not, it is not difficult to understand the relief that the relaxation brought in the first case and the weakness that supervened in the second case. (Marriage no doubt was the remedy in that second case, as in the vast majority of cases marriage is the most natural and desirable state when one finds oneself even against one's will living the

of exploration. I would, however, warn the inexperienced reader from trying it or accepting the directions of the next *hathayogi* he may meet with. Let him be sure that an abstemious and godly life is wholly sufficient to achieve the much to be desired restraint.

## 12

## INFLUENCE OF ATTITUDES\*

"I have been very interested in your articles in *Young India* on the subject of birth control. I expect you have read J. A. Hadfield's book *Psychology and Morals*. I want to draw your attention to this passage from it: 'We therefore speak of sexual pleasure when the expression of this instinct is alien to our moral sense, and we speak of sexual joy when the expression of this instinct is in conformity with the sentiment of love. Such expressions of sex feelings, far from destroying, actually deepen, the love of husband and wife, whereas free sexual indulgence, on the one hand, and on the other hand *sexual abstinence practised under the false idea that the instinct is but a low pleasure, often produces irritability and the weakening of love*,' i. e. he holds that the act of sexual union has a sacramental value in deepening the love between a man and a woman, quite apart from the production of children. If he is right in this — and I am inclined to think he is, for, apart from the fact that he is an eminent psychologist, I have myself known of cases in which married life has been distorted and spoiled by attempts to repress the natural desire for physical expression of love — then I wonder how you would justify your doctrine that the only justifiable act of union is that intended for the production of children. For consider this case. A young man and a young woman love each other. It is beautiful and part of God's plan that they should do so. But they haven't enough money to support and educate a child. And I suppose you would agree that to bring a child into the world without being able to do these things is sinful; or if you like, say that it is bad; for the woman's health to have one, or that she has had too may — anything like that. Now according to you a couple has two alternatives — either they must marry and yet live separately, in which case, if Hadfield is right, their love will tend to be spoiled, because of the irritability produced by repressed desires, or they must remain unmarried, in which case too their love will be spoiled, for nature gloriously ignores our 'human

---

\*Reprinted from *Young India*, September 16, 1926.

procreation to which we are helplessly drawn for the perpetuation of the species? Only man, having been gifted with a free will to a limited extent, exercises the human prerogative of self-denial for the sake of the nobler purpose to which he is born than his brother animals. It is the force of habit which makes us think the sexual act to be necessary and desirable for the promotion of love, apart from procreation, in spite of innumerable experiences to the contrary that it does not deepen love, that it is in no way necessary for its retention or enrichment. Indeed instances can be quoted in which that bond has grown stronger with abstinence. No doubt abstinence must be a voluntary act undertaken for mutual moral advancement.

Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality. If so, it must be based on ever-increasing restraint upon the demands of the flesh. Thus marriage must be considered to be a sacrament imposing discipline upon the partners, restricting them to the physical union only among themselves and for the purpose only of procreation when both the partners desire and are prepared for it. Then in either case supposed by the correspondent, there would be no question of sexual act outside the desire for procreation.

There is an end to all argument, if we start, as my correspondent has started, with the premise that sexual act is a necessity outside of the purpose of procreation. The premise is vitiated in the presence of authentic instances that can be cited of complete abstinence having been practised by some of the highest among mankind in all climes. It is no argument against the possibility or desirability of abstinence to say that it is difficult for the vast majority of mankind. What was not possible for the vast majority a hundred years ago has been found possible today. And what is a hundred years in the cycle of time open to us for making infinite progress? If scientists are right, it was but yesterday that we found ourselves endowed with the human body. Who knows, who dare prescribe, its limitation? Indeed every

world when it reigns supreme. Let us not reproduce on a vast scale the evils we choose to ascribe to capitalist and capitalism.

I am painfully conscious of the fact that self-control is not easily attainable. But its slowness need not ruffle us. Haste is waste. Impatience will not end the evil of excessive birth-rate among the proletariat. Workers among the proletariat have a tremendous task before them. Let them not rule out of their lives the lessons of restraint that the greatest teachers among mankind have handed to us out of the rich stores of their experiences. The fundamental truths they have given us were tested by them in a better laboratory than any equipped under the most up-to-date conditions. The necessity of self-control is the common teaching of them all.

## 13

## A MORAL STRUGGLE\*

"I am a husband aged 30. My wife is about the same age. We have five children, of which two are fortunately dead. I know the responsibility for the rest of our children. But I find it difficult, if not impossible, to discharge that responsibility. You have advised self-restraint. Well, I have practised it for the last three years, but that is very much against my partner's wish. She insists on what poor mortals call the joy of life. You from your superior height may call it a sin. But my partner does not see it in that light. Nor is she afraid of bearing more children to me. She has not the sense of responsibility that I flatter myself with the belief I have. My parents side more with my wife than with me, and there are daily quarrels. The denial of satisfaction to my wife has made her so peevish and so irritable that she flares up on the slightest pretext. My problem now is how to solve the difficulty. The children I have are too many for me. I am too poor to support them. The wife seems utterly irreconcilable. If she does not have the satisfaction she demands, she may even go astray, or go mad, or commit suicide. I tell you, sometimes I feel that, if the law of the land permitted it, I would shoot down all unwanted children as you would stray

---

\*Reprinted from *Young India*, April 26, 1928.

to yield to the wife's importunities. But this refusal at once throws a much greater and more exalted responsibility on the husband's shoulders. He will not look down upon his wife from his insolent height, but will humbly recognize that what to him is not a necessity is to her a fundamental necessity. He will therefore treat her with the utmost gentleness and love, and will have confidence in his own purity to transmute his partner's passion into energy of the highest type. He will therefore have to become her real friend, guide and physician. He will have to give her his fullest confidence, and with inexhaustible patience explain to her the moral basis of his action, the true nature of the relationship that should subsist between husband and wife, and the true meaning of marriage. He will find in the process that many things that were not clear to him before will be clear, and he will draw his partner closer to him if his own restraint is truthful.

In the case in point I cannot help saying that the desire not to have more children is not enough reason for refusing satisfaction. It appears almost cowardly to reject one's wife's advances merely for fear of having to support children. A check upon an unlimited increase in the family is a good ground for both the parties jointly and individually putting a restraint upon sexual desire, but it is not sufficient warrant for one to refuse the privileges of a common bed to the other.

And why this impatience of children? Surely there is enough scope for honest, hard-working and intelligent men to earn enough for a reasonable number of children. I admit that for one like my correspondent, who is honestly trying to devote his whole time to the service of the country, it is difficult to support a large and growing family and at the same time to serve a country, millions of whose children are semi-starved. I have often expressed the opinion in these pages that it is wrong to bring forth progeny in India so long as she is in bondage. But that is a very good reason for young men and young women to abstain from marriage, not a

overcome by temptation at any moment. Now the vow was a sure shield against temptation. The great potentiality of *Brahmacharya* daily became more and more patent to me. The vow was taken when I was in Phoenix. As soon as I was free from ambulance work, I went to Phoenix, whence I had to return to Johannesburg. In about a month of my returning there, the foundation of *Satyagraha* was laid. As though unknown to me, the *Brahmacharya* vow had been preparing me for it. *Satyagraha* had not been a preconceived plan. It came on spontaneously, without my having willed it. But I could see that all my previous steps had led up to that goal. I had cut down my household expenses at Johannesburg and gone to Phoenix, to take, as it were, the *Brahmacharya* vow.

(The knowledge that a perfect observance of *Brahmacharya* means realization of *Brahman* I did not owe to the study of the *Shastras*. It slowly grew upon me with experience. The *Shastric* texts on the subject I read only later in life. Every day of the vow has taken me nearer the knowledge that in *Brahmacharya* lies the protection of the body, the mind and the soul. For *Brahmacharya* was now no process of hard penance, it was a matter of consolation and joy. Every day revealed a fresh beauty in it.)

But if it was a matter of ever increasing joy, let no one believe that it was an easy thing for me. Even while I am past fiftysix years, I realize how hard a thing it is. Every day I realize more and more that it is like walking on the sword's edge, and I see every moment the necessity for eternal vigilance. <sup>or</sup>

(Control of the palate is the first essential in the observance of *Brahmacharya*. I found that complete control of the palate made the observance very easy, and so I now pursued my dietetic experiments not merely from the vegetarian's but also the *Brahmachari's* point of view. As the result of these experiments I saw that the *Brahmachari's* food should be limited, simple, spiceless and, if possible, uncooked.)

extinction of the sexual passion is as a rule impossible without fasting, which may be said to be indispensable for the observance of *Brahmacharya*. Many aspirants after *Brahmacharya* fail, because in the use of their other senses they want to carry on as those who are not *Brahmacharis*. Their effort is therefore identical with the effort to experience the bracing cold of winter in the scorching summer months. There should be a clear line between the life of a *Brahmachari* and of one who is not. The resemblance that there is between the two is only apparent. The distinction ought to be clear as daylight. Both use their eyesight, but whereas the *Brahmachari* uses it to see the glories of God, the other uses it to see the frivolity around him. Both use their ears, but whereas the one hears nothing but praises of God, the other feasts his ears upon ribaldry. Both often keep late hours, but whereas the one devotes them to prayer, the other fritters them away in wild and wasteful mirth. Both feed the inner man, but the one does so only to keep the temple of God in good repair, while the other gorges himself and makes the sacred vessel a stinking gutter. Thus both live as the poles apart, and the distance between them will grow and not diminish with the passage of time.

*Brahmacharya* means control of the senses in thought, word and deed. Every day I have been realizing more and more the necessity for restraints of the kind I have detailed above. There is no limit to the possibilities of renunciation, even as there is none to those of *Brahmacharya*. Such *Brahmacharya* is impossible of attainment by limited effort. For many, it must remain only as an ideal. An aspirant after *Brahmacharya* will always be conscious of his shortcomings, will seek out the passions lingering in the innermost recesses of his heart, and will incessantly strive to get rid of them. So long as thought is not under complete control of the will, *Brahmacharya* in its fulness is absent. Involuntary thought is an affection of the mind; and curbing of thought therefore means curbing of the mind which is even

## 'STARTLING CONCLUSIONS'\*

William R. Thurston, according to the publisher's preface, was a Major in the United States army, which he served for nearly ten years. And, during these years, he had varied experiences in several parts of the world, including China. During his travels he studied the effects of marriage laws and customs, as a result of which he felt the call to write a book on marriage. This book, which is called *Thurston's Philosophy of Marriage* and was published last year by the Tiffany Press, New York, contains only 32 pages of bold type, and can be read inside of an hour. The author has not entered into an elaborate argument, but has simply set forth his conclusions with just a dash of argument to support his conclusions which the publisher truly describes as 'startling'. In his foreword, the author claims to have based his conclusions on "personal observation, data obtained from physicians, statistics of social hygiene and medical statistics", compiled during the war. His conclusions are:

1 "That Nature never intended a woman to be bound to a man for life, and to be compelled to occupy the same bed or habitation with him, night after night, in pregnancy and out, in order to earn her board and lodging, and to exercise her natural right to bear children

2 "That the daily and nightly juxtaposition of the male and female, which is a result of present marriage laws and customs, leads to unrestrained sexual intercourse, which perverts the natural instincts of both male and female, and makes partial prostitutes of 90% of all married women. This condition arises from the fact that married women have been led to believe that such prostitution of themselves is right and natural because it is legal, and that it is necessary in order to retain the affections of their husbands "

The author then goes on to describe the effects of 'continual unrestrained sexual intercourse', which I epitomize as follows :

---

\*Reprinted from *Young India*, 27-8-1928.

The author is equally opposed, as we have already seen, to contraceptive methods.

S. Ganesan, the enterprising publisher of Madras, has obtained the permission of the author to reprint the booklet for circulation in India. If he does so, the reader can possess a copy at a trifling price. He has secured also the rights of translation.

Many of the other remedies suggested by the author are, in my opinion, not of practical use to us, and in any case require legislative sanction. But every husband and wife can make a fixed resolution from today never to share the same room or the same bed at night, and to avoid sexual contact, except for the one supreme purpose for which it is intended for both man and beast. The beast observes the law invariably. Man having got the choice has grievously erred in making the wrong choice. Every woman can decline to have anything to do with contraception. Both man and woman should know that abstention from satisfaction of the sexual appetite results not in disease but in health and vigour, provided that mind cooperates with the body. The author believes that the present condition of marriage laws 'is responsible for the greater part of all the ills of the world today.' One need not share this sweeping belief with the author to come to the two final decisions I have suggested. But there can be no doubt that a large part of the miseries of today can be avoided, if we look at the relations between the sexes in a healthy and pure light, and regard ourselves as trustees for the moral welfare of the future generations.

If the married couple can think of each other as brother and sister, they are freed for universal service. The very thought that all the women in the world are one's sisters, mothers or daughters will at once ennoble a man and snap his chains. The husband and wife do not lose anything here, but only add to their resources and even to their family. Their love becomes free from the impurity of lust and so grows stronger. With the disappearance of this impurity, they can serve each other better, and the occasions for quarrel become fewer. There are more occasions for quarrel, where the love is selfish and bounded.

( If the foregoing argument is appreciated, a consideration of the physical benefits of chastity becomes a matter of secondary importance. How foolish it is intentionally to dissipate vital energy in sensual enjoyment! It is a grave misuse to fritter away for physical gratification that which is given to man and woman for the full development of their bodily and mental powers. Such misuse is the root cause of many a disease.

*Brahmacharya*, like all other observances, must be observed in thought, word and deed. We are told in the *Gita*, and experience will corroborate the statement, that the foolish man, who appears to control his body but is nursing evil thoughts in his mind, makes a vain effort. It may be harmful to suppress the body, if the mind is at the same time allowed to go astray. Where the mind wanders, the body must follow sooner or later.

It is necessary here to appreciate a distinction. It is one thing to allow the mind to harbour impure thoughts; it is a different thing altogether if it strays among them in spite of ourselves. Victory will be ours in the end, if we non-cooperate with the mind in its evil wanderings.

We experience every moment of our lives that often while the body is subject to our control, the mind is not. This physical control should never be relaxed, and in addition we must put forth a constant endeavour to bring the mind under control. We can do nothing more,

## BIRTH CONTROL (I)

A co-worker who is a careful reader of my writings was disturbed to read that I was likely to approve of the 'safe period' method of birth control. I endeavoured to make it clear to the friend that the safe period method did not repel me as did the use of contraceptives and that it was open largely only to married couples. But the discussion of the topic led us into much deeper waters than either of us had expected. The fact that my friend was repelled by the safe period method as much as by that of contraceptives showed to me that he believed in the possibility of ordinary persons practising the restraint imposed by the *Smritis*, i. e. that the union between husband and wife was permitted only when the parties really desired to have children. Whilst I knew the rule, I had never regarded it in the light that I began to do at the discussion. All these long years I had regarded it as a counsel of perfection not to be carried out literally, and had believed that so long as married couples carried on intercourse by mutual consent but without special regard to the desire for progeny, they were carrying out the purpose of marriage without breaking any positive injunction of the *Smritis*. But the new light in which I viewed the *Smriti* text was a revelation to me. I understood now as I never had done before the statement that married people, who strictly observed the injunction of the *Smritis*, were as much *Brahmacharis* as those who were never married and lived chaste lives.

The sole object of sexual intercourse according to the new light was the desire for progeny, never gratification of the sexual instinct. Simple gratification of the instinct would be counted according to this view of marriage as lust. This may appear to be a harsh expression to use for our enjoyment which has hitherto been regarded as innocent and legitimate. But I am not dealing

spite of the evidence to the contrary that is often produced by the advocates of the method.

I believe I have no superstition in me. Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion because it is ancient. There are some fundamentals of life which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life.

Birth control through self-control is no doubt difficult. But no one has yet been known seriously to dispute its efficacy and even superiority over the use of contraceptives.

Then, I feel that the full acceptance of the implication of the injunction of the *shastras* as to the strictly confined use of the sexual act, makes the observance of self-control much easier than if one regards the act itself as a source of supreme enjoyment. The function of the organs of generation is merely to generate progeny obviously of the highest type possible for a married couple. This can and should only take place when both parties desire, not sexual union but progeny, which is the result of such union. Desire for such union, therefore, without the desire for progeny, must be considered unlawful and should be restrained.

The possibility of such control for the ordinary man will be examined in the next issue.

*Harjan, 14-3-1936.*

the door. But the moral harm it does to the individual and society is incalculable. For one thing, the outlook upon life for those who satisfy the sexual appetite for the sake of it is wholly changed. Marriage ceases to be a sacrament for them. It means a revaluation of the social ideals hitherto prized as a precious treasure. No doubt this argument will make little appeal to those who regard the old ideals about marriage as a superstition. My argument is only addressed to those who regard marriage as a sacrament and woman not as an instrument of animal pleasure but as mother of man and trustee of the virtue of her progeny.

My experience of self-control by fellow-workers and myself confirms me in the view presented here. It assumes overwhelming force from the discovery in a vivid light of the ancient conception of marriage. For me *Brahmacharya* in married life now assumes its natural and inevitable position and becomes as simple as the fact of marriage itself. Any other method of birth control seems useless and unthinkable. Once the idea that the only and grand function of the sexual organ is generation, possesses man and woman, union for any other purpose they will hold as criminal waste of the vital fluid and cosequent excitement caused to man and woman as an equally criminal waste of precious energy. It is now easy to understand why the scientists of old have put such great value upon the vital fluid and why they have insisted upon its strong transmutation into the highest form of energy for the benefit of society. They boldly declare that one who has acquired a perfect control over his or her sexual energy strengthens the whole being, physical, mental and spiritual, and attains powers unattainable by any other means.

Let not the reader be disturbed by the absence of many or even any living specimens of such giant *Brahmacharis*. The *Brahmacharis* we see about us today are very incomplete specimens. At best they are aspirants who have acquired control over their bodies but not their minds. They have not

complicated when the parties happen to be otherwise healthy and free from any physical defect "

I admit the difficulty, but the difficulty is inherent in the problem itself. The road to any progress is strewn with such difficulty, and the story of man's ascent in the scale of evolution is co-extensive with the history of the successful overcoming of these difficulties. Take the story of the attempts to conquer the Himalayas. The higher you go the steeper becomes the climb, the more difficult the ascent, so much so that its highest peak still remains unvanquished. The enterprise has already exacted a heavy toll of sacrifice. Yet every year sees fresh attempts made only to end in failure like their predecessors. All that has, however, failed to damp the spirit of the explorers. If that is the case with the conquest of the Himalayas, what about the conquest of self, which is a harder job by far, even as the reward is richer? The scaling of the Himalayas can, at best, give a temporary feeling of elation and triumph. But the reward of the conquest of self is a spiritual bliss that knows no waning and grows ever more and more. It is a well-known maxim of the science of *Brahmacharya* that insemination in the case of a man who has properly kept the rules of *Brahmacharya* cannot, ought not to, fail to lead to conception. And this is just as it should be. When a man has completely conquered his animality, involuntary incontinence becomes impossible, and the desire for sexual gratification for its own sake ceases altogether. Sexual union then takes place only when there is a desire for offspring. This is the meaning of what has been described as 'Married *Brahmacharya*'. In other words, a person who obeys this rule, though leading a married life, attains the same state as and is equal in merit to one who completely abstains from the sexual act, which is only a means for procreation, never for self-indulgence. In practice, it is true, this ideal is seen to be rarely realized in its completeness. But in shaping our ideals we cannot think in terms of our weaknesses or the

complicated when the parties happen to be otherwise healthy and free from any physical defect "

I admit the difficulty, but the difficulty is inherent in the problem itself. The road to any progress is strewn with such difficulty, and the story of man's ascent in the scale of evolution is co-extensive with the history of the successful overcoming of these difficulties. Take the story of the attempts to conquer the Himalayas. The higher you go the steeper becomes the climb, the more difficult the ascent, so much so that its highest peak still remains unvanquished. The enterprise has already exacted a heavy toll of sacrifice. Yet every year sees fresh attempts made only to end in failure like their predecessors. All that has, however, failed to damp the spirit of the explorers. If that is the case with the conquest of the Himalayas, what about the conquest of self, which is a harder job by far, even as the reward is richer? The scaling of the Himalayas can, at best, give a temporary feeling of elation and triumph. But the reward of the conquest of self is a spiritual bliss that knows no waning and grows ever more and more. It is a well-known maxim of the science of *Brahmacharya* that insemination in the case of a man who has properly kept the rules of *Brahmacharya* cannot, ought not to, fail to lead to conception. And this is just as it should be. When a man has completely conquered his animality, involuntary incontinence becomes impossible, and the desire for sexual gratification for its own sake ceases altogether. Sexual union then takes place only when there is a desire for offspring. This is the meaning of what has been described as 'Married *Brahmacharya*'. In other words, a person who obeys this rule, though leading a married life, attains the same state as and is equal in merit to one who completely abstains from the sexual act, which is only a means for procreation, never for self-indulgence. In practice, it is true, this ideal is seen to be rarely realized in its completeness. But in shaping our ideals we cannot think in terms of our weaknesses or the

and strength. Anyone can test for himself the truth of this observation of the *shastras* for himself by personal experience. And the rule holds good in respect of woman no less than man. The real difficulty, however, is that we vainly expect to be free from outward manifestations of lust, while harbouring it in our minds, with the result that physically and mentally we become utter wrecks, and our lives, in the words of the *Gita*, become a living lie or hypocrisy personified.

*Hanjan* 20-3-1937.

## 20

## THE CAUSE OF IT

A Bangalore correspondent asks:

"You say that a married couple may have sexual union only when there is a mutual desire for a child and on no other account. Please let me know why one should wish for a child at all. Many people wish for children without fully realizing the responsibilities of parenthood, and many more wish for children fully knowing that they are incapable of discharging the responsibilities of a parent. Many persons who are physically and mentally unfit for parenthood wish for children. Don't you think that it is wrong for these persons to procreate?"

I should like to know the motive behind the desire for children. Many people wish for children to bequeath their possessions and to break the monotony of their life. A few people wish for a male child lest the gates of Heaven would not be opened for them. Are not these people wrong in wishing for a child?"

It is good to seek causes for things. But it is not always possible to discover them. The desire for children is universal. But I do not know any convincing cause, if to see oneself perpetuated through one's descendants is not a sufficient and convincing cause. My proposition, however, is not vitiated if the cause I give for the desire is not found sufficiently convincing. The desire is there. It seems to be natural. I am not sorry for having been born. It cannot be unlawful for

deceive them. Their thoughts cherish the desire, and their speech is a false interpreter of their thoughts. If on the other hand the speech is a true interpreter of the thoughts, there can be no such thing as weakness. Defeat there may be. Weakness never.

The correspondent's objection to procreation by unhealthy parents is perfectly valid. They can have or should have no desire for progeny. They are deceiving themselves and the world if they say that they perform the sexual act for progeny. In an examination of any subject truthfulness is always assumed. Desire for progeny must not be feigned in order to cover the pleasure of sexual union.

*Harijan*, 24-4-1937

## 21

### FOR CONTRACEPTIVES

A correspondent writes :

"I would like to say a few words on the report of the interview between Mrs. Sanger and Mahatma Gandhi that appeared recently in the *Harijan*.

"The cardinal fact that I see missed in the interview is that it has not been taken into consideration that man is above all an artist and a creator. He is not satisfied with bare necessity, but must have beauty, colour and charm as well 'If ye have one pice only, buy bread of it, if two, one worth of bread and worth of flower,'—said Prophet Muhammad. In it is embodied a great psychological truth—the truth that man is by nature an artist. That is why we find him engaged in making his raiment something more than the mere necessity of sustaining his body. He has made every necessity into an art and has spent tons of blood on them. His creative instinct impels him to add to his difficulties and problems and solve them over again. He *cannot* be 'simple' as Rousseau, Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Gandhi would like him to be. War he must have as its necessary corollary which also he has transformed into a great art.

To appeal to him the example of nature would be in vain, for it is totally incompatible with his very being. 'Nature' *cannot* be his teacher. Those who appeal to it overlook that it does not

night (i. e. as opposed to abnormal cohabitation during the day-time). Here normal sex life itself is spoken of as *brahmacharya*, the rigid conception of which began after we had already topsy-turved the proper scheme of all the values of life "

I gladly publish this letter as I should any such letter that is not full of declamation, abuse or insinuations. The reader should have both the sides of the question to enable him to come to a decision. I am myself eager to know why a thing which is claimed to be scientific and beneficial and which has many distinguished supporters repels me notwithstanding my effort to see the bright side of it.

Thus it is not proved to my satisfaction that sexual union in marriage is in itself good and beneficial to the unionists. To the contrary effect I can bear ample testimony from my own experience and that of many friends. I am not aware of any of us having derived any benefit, mental, spiritual or physical. Momentary excitement and satisfaction there certainly was. But it was invariably followed by exhaustion. And the desire for union returned immediately the effect of exhaustion had worn out. Although I have always been a conscientious worker, I can clearly recall the fact that this indulgence interfered with my work. It was the consciousness of this limitation that put me on the track of self-restraint; and I have no manner of doubt that the self-restraint is responsible for the comparative freedom from illnesses that I have enjoyed for long periods and for my output of energy and work both physical and mental which eye-witnesses have described as phenomenal.

I fear that the correspondent has misapplied his reading. Man is undoubtedly an artist and creator. Undoubtedly he must have beauty and therefore colour. His artistic and creative nature at its best taught him to see art in self-restraint and ugliness in un-creative union. His instinct for the artistic taught him to discriminate and to know that any conglomeration of colours was no mark of beauty, nor every sense enjoyment good in itself. His eye for art taught man to seek enjoyment in

Abyssinian frontier. The correspondent has chosen unhappy (for him) names for his illustrations. Rousseau, Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy were first-class artists of their time. They will live even after many of us are dead, cremated and forgotten.

The correspondent seems to have misapplied the word nature. When an appeal to man is made to copy or study nature, he is not invited to follow what the reptiles do or even what the king of the forest does. He has to study man's nature at its best, i.e. I presume his regenerate nature, whatever it may be. Perhaps it requires considerable effort to know what regenerate nature is. It is dangerous nowadays to refer to old teachers. I suggest to the correspondent that it is unnecessary to bring in Nietzsche or even *Prashnopanishad*. The question for me is past the stage of quotations. What has cold reason to say on the point under discussion? Is it or is it not correct to say that the only right use of the generative organ is to confine it solely to generation and that any other use is its abuse? If it is, no difficulty in achieving the right use and avoiding the wrong should baffle the scientific seeker.

Harizan, 4-4-1936

bond between two people and make for durability of their marriage tie. More marriages fail from inadequate and clumsy sex love than from too much sex love. Passion is a worthy possession; most men who are any good are capable of passion. Sex love without passion is a poor lifeless thing. Sensuality on the other hand is on a level with gluttony, a physical excess. Now that the revision of the Prayer Book is receiving consideration I should like to suggest, with great respect, that an addition be made to the objects of marriage in the Marriage Service in these terms 'The complete realization of the love of this man and this woman, the one for the other.'

I will pass on to consider the all-important question of birth control. Birth control is here to stay. It is an established fact, and for good or evil has to be accepted. No denunciations will abolish it. The reasons which lead parents to limit their offspring are sometimes selfish, but more often honourable and cogent. The desire to marry and to rear children well-equipped for life's struggle, limited incomes, the cost of living, burdensome taxation, are forcible motives, and, further, amongst the educated classes there is the desire of women to take part in life and their husbands' careers, which is incompatible with oft-recurring pregnancies. Absence of birth control means late marriages, and these carry with them irregular unions and all the baneful consequences. It is idle to decry illicit intercourse and interpose obstacles to marriage at one and the same time. But say many, 'Birth control may be necessary, but the only control which is justifiable is voluntary abstention.' Such abstention would be either ineffective or, if effective, impracticable and harmful to health and happiness. To limit the size of a family to, say, four children, would be to impose on a married couple an amount of abstention which for long periods would almost be equivalent to celibacy, and when one remembers that owing to economic reasons the abstention would have to be most strict during the earlier years of marriage life when desires are strongest, I maintain a demand is being made which, for the mass of people, it is impossible to meet, that the endeavours to meet it would impose a strain hostile to health and happiness and carry with them grave dangers to morals. The thing is preposterous. You might as well put water by the side of a man suffering from thirst and tell him not to drink it. No, birth control by abstention is either ineffective, or, if effective, is pernicious.

It is said to be unnatural and intrinsically immoral. Civilization involves the chaining of natural forces and their conversion to man's will and uses. When anaesthetics were first used at child birth there was an outcry that their use was unnatural

In such surroundings, the use of contraceptives can only further aggravate the mischief. The poor girls who are expected to submit to their husbands' desires are now to be taught that it is a good thing to desire sexual satisfaction without the desire to have children. And in order to fulfil the double purpose they are to have recourse to contraceptives!!!

I regard this to be the most pernicious education for married women. I do not believe that woman is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint. I hold that the right education in this country is to teach woman the art of saying *no* even to her husband, to teach her that it is no part of her duty to become a mere tool or a doll in her husband's hands. She has rights as well as duties. Those who see in Sita a willing slave under Rama do not realize the loftiness of either her independence or Rama's consideration for her in everything. Sita was no helpless weak woman incapable of protecting herself or her honour. To ask India's women to take to contraceptives is, to say the least, putting the cart before the horse. The first thing is to free her from mental slavery, to teach her sacredness of her body, and to teach her dignity of national service and the service of humanity. It is not fair to assume that India's women are beyond redemption, and that they have therefore to be simply taught the use of contraceptives for the sake of preventing births and preserving such health as they may be in possession of.

Let not the sisters who are rightly indignant over the miseries of women who are called upon to bear children, whether they will or no, be impatient. Not even the propaganda in favour of contraceptives is going to promote the desired end overnight. Every method is a matter of education. My plea is for the right type.

is not only of greater value but decisive. To dismiss my evidence as useless because I am popularly regarded as a 'Mahatma', is not proper in a serious inquiry.

Far more weighty is the argument of a sister who says in effect: "We, the advocates of contraceptives, have come on the scene only recently. You self-controllers had the field all to yourselves all these long generations, — maybe thousands of years. What have you to show to your credit? Has the world learnt the lesson of self-control? What have you done to stop the misery of overburdened families? Have you heard the cry of wounded motherhood? Come, the field is even now open to you. We do not mind your advocacy of self-control. We may even wish you success, if perchance you save wives from the unwanted approaches of their husbands. But why should you seek to decry the methods which we employ, and which take note of, and make every allowance for common human weaknesses or habits, and which when properly employed almost never fail to accomplish their purpose?"

The taunt is dictated by the anguish of a sister filled with compassion for the families that are always in want because of the ever-increasing number of children. The appeal of human misery has been known to melt hearts of stone. How can it fail to effect high-souled sisters? But such appeals may easily lead one astray, if one is lifted off one's feet and, like a drowning man, catches any floating straw.

We are living in times when values are undergoing quick changes. We are not satisfied with slow results. We are not satisfied with the welfare merely of our own caste-fellows, not even of our own country. We feel or want to feel for the whole of humanity. All this is a tremendous gain in humanity's march towards its goal.

But we won't find the remedy for human ills by losing patience and by rejecting everything that is old because it is old. Our ancestors also dreamt, perhaps vaguely, the same dreams that fire us with zeal. The

of self-control has never been suspended. The most effective is that of example. The larger the number of honest persons who practise successful self-control, the more effective becomes the propaganda.

*Harijan*, 30-5-1936

## 24

### BIRTH CONTROL THROUGH SELF-CONTROL

The following letter has been lying on my file for a considerable time

"The craze for birth control is today sweeping all over the world, and India is no exception I have been closely following your articles in support of self-control in which I believe. Recently a 'Birth Control League' has been started in Ahmedabad. It advocates the use of modern contraceptive appliances to enable men and women to practise unlimited self-indulgence with impunity.

It seems to me strange that good people who have themselves attained the afternoon of their life should favour a movement which must result in the vitality of the whole race being drained. How one wishes that instead of a 'Birth Control League' these friends had set up a 'Self-Control League' for realizing their goal. I would ask you when you visit Gujarat, to take up this matter and show the light to the women of Gujarat

Our doctors and *vaidyas* today seem to fight shy of taking their stand on self-control for fear of losing their bread. They do not seem to realize that if the new-fangled craze is left to pursue its course unchecked it will inevitably lead society into the abyss of self-destruction. Only a timely adoption of the sovereign remedy of self-control can save it from a certain doom. A wide-spread use of contraceptives will and can only result in plunging the country into an orgy of self-indulgence and abuse, with the inevitable consequences of endless disease and misery."

I did not get any chance, during my recent brief visit to Ahmedabad, to take up the suggestion of this friend. But it is well-known that I hold strongly to the views attributed to me. Wherever contraceptive practices have taken root they have let loose a host of evils which even he who runs can see. But birth control enthusiasts

misery and disease. I would therefore earnestly suggest to the promoters of the said League that if they will only utilize their time and energy to study deeply the evils of self-indulgence and inculcate upon the women the necessity and naturalness of practising self-control as a means of attaining birth control, they will find that they have discovered the best and quickest method of realizing their goal.

*Hannan, 12-12-1936*

## WHAT IT IS LIKE

The recent debate between Dr. Sokhey and Dr. Mangaldas Mehta on the evergreen topic of birth control emboldens me to disclose the opinion of the late Dr. Ansari of revered memory supporting Dr. Mangaldas's position. It was now nearly a year ago, I wrote to the deceased asking him whether as a medical man, he could endorse the position I had taken up on the vexed question. Much to my agreeable surprise he wrote heartily supporting it. When I was in Delhi last, I had a brief discussion with him on the subject, and he promised at my request to contribute a series of articles showing by facts and figures from his own experience and that of other medical men, how the practice had hurt both men and women who were party to it. He gave a graphic account of the condition to which the men were reduced after they had mated for some time with their wives or other women who, they knew, were using contraceptives. Freedom from the fear of the natural consequence of condition had made them reckless in self-indulgence leading to an inordinate craving for seeing women which ended in dementia. Alas ! he died just when he was about to write the promised series.

/ Bernard Shaw is reported to have said that coition accompanied by the case of contraceptives was nothing

## A WITNESS FROM AMERICA

Miss Mabel E. Simpson of Montana (U. S. A.) writes to the Editor :

"I wish to express my appreciation of your publication. What it lacks in size it more than makes up in quality. I greatly enjoyed Mr. Gandhi's article on birth control displaying his usual clear sight into the heart of things. If he had visited America twenty years ago when birth control was disapproved and now when it is in full swing, he would know that it brings moral deterioration. But he would not be able to convince anybody of it, for it also brings a blindness to both moral and spiritual perception that makes it impossible for its followers to discern with sensitivity along high moral and spiritual lines. If India follows the West in this, she will surely lose two of her most priceless and beautiful jewels — affection for little children and reverence for parenthood. America has lost both — and does not know it. Could you print a statement of the meaning of *brahmacharya* ? I have been asked about it, and while I have an idea I am not sure enough to attempt to explain it to others. Thank you "

The reader may place what value he or she chooses on this piece of evidence. I suggest, however, that such evidence against the use of contraceptives is worth far more than that of those who claim to derive benefit from their use. The reason is obvious. The benefit in the sense that advent of children is often checked is not denied. What is contended is that the moral harm the use does is incalculable. Miss Simpson has given us a measure of such harm.

Now for the definition — the meaning — of *brahmacharya*. Its root meaning may be given thus : that conduct which puts one in touch with God.

The conduct consists in the fullest control over all the senses. This is the true and relevant meaning of the word.

Popularly it has come to mean mere physical control over the organ of generation. This narrow meaning has debased *brahmacharya* and made its practice all but impossible. Control over the organ of generation is

'Creation, physical, mental and spiritual, is joy and life. If you are merely seeking the sensations of the flesh with no thought of creating, or even trying to avoid the aim of creation, you are perverting nature and killing your spiritual powers.

'The result will be passion, uncontrolled,—exhaustion, disappointment and defeat. It can never bring out those finer qualities on which we can build a new race of spiritual men and women.'

I know this is like a prophet crying in the wilderness, but I am convinced of the truth of it, and I can but point the way."

This is one of the letters which I occasionally get from America in condemnation of the use of contraceptives. Current literature that India imports weekly from the Far West would have us believe that in America none but idiots and imbeciles oppose the use of this modern method of deliverance from the bondage of the superstition which imprisons the body and crushes it by denying it its supreme enjoyment. That literature produces as much momentary intoxication as the act which it teaches and incites us to perform without incurring the risk of its ordinary result. I do not put before the readers of *Hayan* merely letters of individual condemnation received from the West. They have their use for me as a seeker but very little for the general reader. This letter, however, from a teacher of boys with thirty years' experience behind him has a definite value. It should serve as a guide for Indian teachers and the public—men and women—who are carried away by the overwhelming tide. The use of contraceptives is infinitely more tempting than the whisky bottle. But it is no more lawful than the sparkling liquid for its fatal temptation. Nor can opposition to the use of either be given up in despair because their use seems to be growing. If the opponents have faith in their mission, it has to be pursued. A voice in the wilderness has a potency which voices uttered in the midst of 'the madding crowd' lack. For the voice in the wilderness has meditation, deliberation and unquenchable faith behind it, whilst the babel of voices has generally nothing but the backing of the experience of personal enjoyment or the

there must be perfect co-operation between the mind and the body. For if the mind hankered after satisfaction of the flesh and the body resisted, there must be tremendous waste of vital energy leaving the body thoroughly exhausted. Khansaheb agreed that that was a fair deduction and that, so far as he was able to judge, he felt that the tribesmen were so habituated to continence outside marriage that young men and women never seemed to desire sexual satisfaction outside marriage. Khansaheb also told me that the women in the tribal areas never observed the purdah, there was no false prudery there, the women were fearless, roamed about anywhere freely, were well able to take care of themselves and defend their honour without seeking or needing male protection.

Khansaheb, however, admits that this continence not being based on reason or enlightened faith breaks down when these men and women of the hills come in contact with civilized or soft life where departure from the custom carries no punishment and public opinion looks upon unfaithfulness and adultery with more or less indifference. This opens up reflections which I must not discuss just now. My purpose in writing this just now is to seek corroboration and further light from those who know these tribesmen as Khansaheb does, and to suggest to young men and women of the plains that observance of continence, if it is really natural to the tribesmen, as Khansaheb thinks it is, should be equally natural to us, if only we would inhabit our thought world with the right kind of thoughts and deal summarily with the intruders. Indeed if the right kind settle down in sufficiently large numbers, the intruders will be crowded out no doubt. The process requires courage. But self-restraint never accrues to the faint-hearted. It is the beautiful fruit of watchfulness and ceaseless effort in the form of prayer and fasting. The prayer is not vain repetition nor fasting mere starvation of the body. Prayer has to come from the heart which knows God by faith, and fasting is abstinence from evil or injurious thought, activity

who were clean before they went to public schools have been found to have become unclean, effeminate and imbecile at the end of their school course. The Bihar Committee has recommended the 'instilling into the minds of boys a reverence for religion'. But who is to bell the cat? The teachers alone can teach reverence for religion. But they themselves have none. It is therefore a question of a proper selection of teachers. But a proper selection of teachers means either a much higher pay than is now given, or reversion to teaching not as a career but as a life-long dedication to a sacred duty. This is in vogue even today among Roman Catholics. The first is obviously impossible in a poor country like ours. The second seems to me to be the only course left open. But that course is not open to us under a system of government in which everything has a price and which is the costliest in the world.

The difficulty of coping with the evil is aggravated because the parents generally take no interest in the morals of their children. Their duty is done when they send them to school. The outlook before us is thus gloomy. But there is hope in the fact that there is only one remedy for all evil, viz., general purification. Instead of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the evil, each one of us must do the best one can by the scrupulous attention to one's own immediate surroundings, taking self as the first and the immediate point of attack. We need not hug the comfort to ourselves that we are not like other men. Unnatural vice is not an isolated phenomenon. It is but a violent symptom of the same disease. If we have impurity within us, if we are sexually depraved, we must right ourselves before expecting to reform our neighbours. There is too much sitting in judgment upon others and too much indulgence towards self. The result is a vicious circle. Those who realize the truth of it must get out of it, and they will find that progress though never easy becomes sensibly possible.

selection of teachers, and having selected them, they have to see to it that they remain up to the mark. These are some of the ways in which the awful vice can be brought under control even if it cannot be eradicated.

*Harijan*, 27-4-1935

### 31

## DUTY OF REFORMERS

I gladly publish the following letter from the Principal, Sanatan Dharma College, Lahore.

"In all earnestness I beg to draw your attention to the horror of the atrocities connected with cases of unnatural offence committed on children

As you are well aware, very few of these cases are reported to the police or taken to law courts. Of late there seems to have been an orgy of such cases in the Punjab. The enclosed newspaper cuttings, which report only the most flagrant of the very rare cases that come to law courts, will fully reveal to you the magnitude of this menace to our young boys and girls. Some months back daring attempts were made in Lahore by *gundas* to abduct little school-boys from the very gates of some schools in broad daylight. Even now special vigilance arrangements are necessary for them while going to and returning from school. The circumstances of the assaults narrated in the reports of the cases tried, are of rare and diabolical cruelty and daring

The feeling of the public in general is either one of apathy or of helplessness and lack of self-confidence in the matter of organized effort to crush these crimes

The enclosed copy of a circular issued by the Government of the Punjab will show you how the Government feel helplessness in the face of the apathy of the public as well as of their departmental officers.

You rightly remarked in your editorial notes in *Young India* of the 9th September 1926, and of the 27th June 1929, that the time was ripe for a public discussion of the subject of sexual offences of this class, and that only a levelling up of public opinion all over the country could cope with the evil. The only effective way to such levelling up of public opinion is publicity through newspapers.

I submit most respectfully that this is the least that the horrible situation demands; and I appeal to you to give a lead to our press by raising your powerful voice for mobilizing an intensive press campaign against this horror."

## FOR THE YOUNG

It is the fashion in some quarters nowadays for the young to discredit whatever may be said by old people. I am not prepared to say that there is absolutely no justification for this belief. But I warn the youth of the contry against always discounting whatever old men or women may say, for the mere fact that it is said by such persons. Even as wisdom often comes from the mouths of babes, so does it often come from the mouths of old people. The golden rule is to test everything in the light of reason and experience, no matter from whom it comes. I want to revert to the subject of birth control by contraceptives. It is dinned into one's ears that gratification of the sex urge is a solemn obligation like the obligation of discharging debts lawfully incurred, and that, not to do so would involve the penalty of intellectual decay. This sex urge has been isolated from the desire for progeny, and it is said by the protagonists of the use of contraceptives that conception is an accident to be prevented except when the parties desire to have children. I venture to suggest that this is a most dangerous doctrine to preach anywhere; much more so in a country like India where the middle class male population has become imbecile through abuse of the creative function. If satisfaction of the sex urge is a duty, the unnatural vice of which I wrote some time ago and several other ways of gratification would be commendable. The reader should know that even persons of note have been known to approve of what is commonly known as sexual perversion. He may be shocked at the statement. But if it somehow or other gains the stamp of respectability, it will be the rage among boys and girls to satisfy their urge among members of their own sex. For me the use of contraceptives is not far removed from the means to which persons have hitherto resorted for the gratification of their sexual desire with the

man with seed that has the highest potency and woman with a field richer than the richest earth to be found anywhere on this globe. Surely it is criminal folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is a woman guilty of criminal folly who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents given to them and they will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter; but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue. The greatest disservice protagonists of contraceptives are rendering to the youth of India is to fill their minds with what appears to me to be wrong ideology. Let the young men and women of India who hold her destiny in their hands beware of this false god and guard the treasure with which God has blessed them and use it, if they wish, for the only purpose for which it is intended.

*Harijan*, 28-3-1936

Of course my sympathies are with young men and young women. I have a vivid recollection of the days of my own youth. And it is because of my faith in the youth of the country that I am never tired of dealing with problems that face them.

For the morals, ethics and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, *ahimsa* and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practised is referable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

Without continence a man or woman is undone. To have no control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship, bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock. Hence my constant insistence on continence. My correspondent is right in saying in effect that the coming in of contraceptives has changed the ideas about sexual relations. If mutual consent makes a sexual act moral whether within marriage or without, and by parity of reasoning, even between members of the same sex, the whole basis of sexual morality is gone and nothing but 'misery and defeat' awaits the youth of the country. Many young men and women are to be found in India who would be glad to be free from the craving for mutual intercourse in whose grip they find themselves. This craving is stronger than the strongest intoxicant which has ever enslaved man. It is futile to hope that the use of contraceptives will be restricted to the mere regulation of progeny. There is hope for a decent life only so long as the sexual act is definitely related to the conception of precious life. This rules out of court perverted sexuality and to a lesser degree promiscuity. Divorce of the sexual act from its natural consequence must lead to hideous promiscuity and condonation, if not endorsement, of unnatural vice.

## A YOUTH'S DIFFICULTY

A correspondent who prefers to remain anonymous seeks an answer to a question arising out of my article in *Harijan* addressed to the young. Although it is a sound rule to ignore anonymous correspondence, I do sometimes make an exception when the question put is substantial as in the present case.

The letter is in Hindi and is longer than it need have been. Its purport is

"From your writing I doubt if you understand the young mind. What has been possible for you is not possible for all young men. I happen to be married. I can restrain myself. My wife cannot. She does not want children, but she does want to enjoy herself. What am I to do? Is it not my duty to satisfy her? I am not generous enough to look upon her satisfying her desire through other channels. I read from the papers that you are not averse to promoting marriages and blessing them. Surely you know or ought to know that they are not contracted with the high purpose that you have mentioned."

The correspondent is right. The fact that I bless so many marriages when they satisfy the tests that I have set as to age, economy, etc., perhaps shows somewhat that I know the youth of the country to an extent that would justify my guiding them when they seek my guidance.

My correspondent's case is typical. He deserves sympathy. That the sole purpose of sexual connection is procreation is in the nature of a new discovery for me. Though I had known the rule, I had never before given it the weight it deserved. I must have till recently regarded it as a mere pious wish. I now regard it as a fundamental law of married state, which is easy of observance if its paramount importance is duly recognized. My object will be fulfilled when the law is given its due place in society. To me it is a living law. We break it always and pay heavily for its breach. If my correspondent realizes its inestimable value and if he has love for his wife and has faith in

## FOR STUDENTS

"With reference to your note entitled 'A Student's Difficulty,' appearing in the *Hanjan* dated January 9, 1937, I submit the following in all humility for your kind consideration. I feel you have not done justice to the student in question. The problem defies easy solution. Your reply to his question is vague and general. You ask students to shake off false notions of dignity and rank themselves among the common labourers. All this general talk does not carry one far and is certainly not worthy of a supremely practical man like you. Please consider the problem at greater length and offer a detailed, practical and comprehensive solution with special reference to the following case.

I am a student of M. A. (Ancient Indian History) in the University of Lucknow. I am about 21 years of age. I have a love for learning and want to do as much of it as possible in my lifetime. I am also inspired by your ideology of life. In about a month's time when the final M. A. Examinations come off I will have done with my education, and will have to enter life, as they say. Besides a wife, I have 4 brothers (all younger, one of them married), 2 sisters (both below twelve years of age) and my parents to support. There is no capital to fall back upon. The landed property is very small. What should I do for the education of the sisters and brothers? Then the sisters will have to be married sooner rather than later. Above all, where are the food and clothing to come from? I am not a lover of the so-called standard of living. I want just a healthy condition of life, besides provision for emergencies for myself and for those who depend on me. It is more or less only a question of two healthy meals and tidy clothes. I want to lead an economically honest life. I don't want to earn a living by usury or by selling flesh. I have an ambition for patriotic service also. I am willing to fulfil your conditions laid down in the note referred to above to the best of my ability. But I do not know what to do! Where and how to begin? My education has been ruinously academic, and theoretical. I sometimes think of spinning, your pet panacea, but then I do not know how to learn it and what to do with the spun yarn, etc.

Yes, under the circumstances in which I am placed, will you suggest my adopting contraceptive methods? I may assure you I believe in self-control and *brahmacharya*. But then it will be some time before I become a *brahmachari*. I am afraid unless I adopt artificial contraceptive methods during the period before the desired consummation of full self-control, I may get children

I might as well discuss here his sister's marriage to which reference has been made in the letter. I do not know what is meant by marriage taking place 'sooner rather than later'. In no case need it take place before they are 20 years old. It is no use thinking so many years in advance. And if he will revise the whole scheme of life, he will have the sisters to choose their partners, and the ceremony need never cost more than five rupees each, if that. I have been present at several such ceremonies. And the husbands or their elders have been graduates in fair circumstances.

It is pathetic to find the student so helpless as not to know how and where to have spinning lessons. Let him make a diligent search in Lucknow and he will find that there are young men enough to teach him. But he need not confine himself to spinning, though it too is fast becoming a full-time occupation able to give a village-minded man or woman his or her livelihood. I hope I have said here sufficient to enable him to dot the i's and cross the t's.

And now for contraceptives. Even here, the difficulty is imaginary. He is wrong in underrating his wife's intelligence. I have no doubt whatsoever that if she is the ordinary type of womanhood, she will readily respond to his self-restraint. Let him be true to himself and ask himself whether he has enough of it himself. All the evidence in my possession goes to show that it is man who lacks the power of self-restraint more than woman. But there is no need for belittling his own inability to exercise restraint. He must manfully face the prospect of a large family and discover the best means of supporting them. He must know that against the millions who are strangers to the use of contraceptives, there are possibly a few thousand who use them. The millions are in no dread of having to breed their children though the latter may not all be wanted. I suggest that it is cowardly to refuse to face the consequences of one's acts. Persons who use contraceptives will never learn the virtue of self-restraint. They will not need it.

particular society, cannot be recognized all at once or at the will of an individual. Nor has society or relatives of parties concerned any right to impose their will upon, and forcibly curtail the liberty of action of the young people who may want to contract such marriages. In the instance cited by the correspondent, both the parties had fully attained maturity. They could well think for themselves. No one had a right forcibly to prevent them from marrying each other if they wanted to. Society could at the most refuse to recognize the marriage, but it was the height of tyranny to drive them to suicide.

Marriage taboos are not universal and are largely based on social usage. The usage varies from province to province and as between different divisions. This does not mean that the youth may ride roughshod over all established social customs and inhibitions. Before they decide to do so, they must convert public opinion to their side. In the meantime, the individuals concerned ought patiently to bide their time or, if they cannot do that calmly and quietly, to face the consequences of social ostracism.

At the same time it is equally the duty of society not to take up a heartless, step-motherly attitude towards those who might disregard or break the established conventions. In the instance described by my correspondent, the guilt of driving the young couple to suicide certainly rests on the shoulders of society if the version that is before me is correct.

*Hanjan, 29-5-1937*

of having only one offspring should be modified so as to include the begetting of a male issue in addition to the possible female ones?

I entirely agree with you that a married person who confines the sex act strictly to the purpose of procreation, should be regarded as a *brahmachari*. I also hold with you that in the case of a married couple who have practised the rule of purity and self-control before and after marriage, a single act of union must lead to conception. In support of your first point there is in our *shastras* the celebrated story of Vishwamitra and Arundhati, the wife of Vasishtha who, in spite of her one hundred sons, was greeted by Vishwamitra as a perfect *brahmacharini*, whose command even the elements were bound to obey because her conjugal relations with her husband were purely directed to the attainment and discharge of the function of motherhood. But I doubt whether even the Hindu *shastras* would support your ideal of having only one offspring, irrespective of whether it is male or female. It seems to me, therefore, that if you liberalize your ideal of married life so as to include the begetting of one male offspring in addition to the possible female ones, it would go a long way towards satisfying many married couples. Otherwise, I am afraid, most people would find it to be harder to limit sexual relationship to the procreation of the first child and then, irrespective of its sex, practise complete abstinence for the rest of life than never to marry at all. I am being slowly forced to the view that sexuality is man's primitive nature, self-control is a cultivated virtue representing a step in his upward evolution towards religion and spirituality which is the natural law of his development. That is why self-control has been held in such high regard. I honour the person who lives up to the ideal of regarding sexual union only as a means for procreation. I also agree that coming together under any other circumstance would be sensual indulgence. But I am not prepared to condemn it as a heinous sin or to regard a husband and wife who cannot help their nature as fallen creatures to be treated with cheap pity or high-brow contempt."

I do not know what the scientific basis for the various taboos in respect of marriage relationships is. But it seems to me clear that a social custom or usage that helps the practice of virtue and self-control, should have the sanctity of a moral law. If it is eugenic considerations that are at the root of interdiction of marriages between brother and sister, then they ought to apply equally to cousin-marriages. A safe rule of conduct, therefore, would be as a rule to respect such taboos where they exist in a

is not inconsistent with the highest ideal of *brahmacharya*. But the whole of that story need not be taken literally. Sexual intercourse for the purpose of carnal satisfaction is reversion to animality, and it should therefore be man's endeavour to rise above it. But failure to do so as between husband and wife, cannot be regarded as a sin or a matter of obloquy. Millions in this world eat for the satisfaction of their palate; similarly, millions of the husbands and wives indulge in the sex act for their carnal satisfaction and will continue to do so and also pay the inexorable penalty in the shape of numberless ills with which nature visits all violations of its order. The ideal of absolute *brahmacharya* or of married *brahmacharya* is for those who aspire to a spiritual or higher life; it is the *sine qua non* of such life.

*Harjan*, 5-6-1937

### 38

#### SEX EDUCATION

Shri Maganbhai Desai, who received the other day the degree equivalent to Master of Arts from the Gujarat Vidyapith, wrote to me a Gujarati letter dated 7th October from which I cull the following :

'May I invite you to discuss in the columns of the *Harjanbandhu* a question which you have so far left more or less untouched, I mean the question of imparting sex instruction to young people ? As you know, Shri — is regarded as a great advocate in its favour in Gujarat Personally I have had always my doubts. But apart from them, I am not sure whether this particular gentleman is at all fitted for the task. The results at any rate are not at all encouraging According to this gentleman it would seem as if the lack of sex education was at the root of all our educational problems and social ills. He and people of his way of thinking simply pounce upon the teaching of modern psychology that dormant libido is the motive spring of all human activity, and without further ado, set to exalt and almost deify it —, that imp of our Ashram, remarked to me the other day, 'What do you know of the demon of sex which is in every breast ?' His remark seemed to me to betray a dulling rather than awakening of his

the cause of Harijans, communal unity, khadi, cow-preservation or village reconstruction. Great causes like these cannot be served by intellectual equipment alone; they call for spiritual effort or soul-force. Soul-force comes only through God's grace, and God's grace never descends upon a man who is a slave to lust.

What place has then instruction in sexual science in our educational system, or has it any place there at all? Sexual science is of two kinds—that which is used for controlling or overcoming the sexual passion, and that which is used to stimulate and feed it. Instruction in the former is as necessary a part of a child's education as the latter is harmful and dangerous and fit therefore only to be shunned. All great religions have rightly regarded '*kama*' as the arch-enemy of man, anger or hatred coming only in the second place. According to the *Gita*, the latter is an offspring of the former. The *Gita*, of course, uses the word '*kama*' in its wider sense of desire. But the same holds good of the narrow sense in which it is used here.

This, however, still leaves unanswered the question, i. e. whether it is desirable to impart to young pupils a knowledge about the use and function of generative organs. It seems to me that it is necessary to impart such knowledge to a certain extent. At present they are often left to pick up such knowledge anyhow with the result that they are misled into abusive practices. We cannot properly control or conquer the sexual passion by turning a blind eye to it. I am therefore strongly in favour of teaching young boys and girls, the significance and right use of their generative organs. And in my own way I have tried to impart this knowledge to young children of both sexes for whose training I was responsible.

But the sex education that I stand for, must have for its object the conquest and sublimation of the sex passion. Such education should automatically serve to bring home to children, the essential distinction between man and brute, to make them realize that it is man's special privilege and pride to be gifted with the faculties of head

## AN UNNATURAL FATHER

A young man has sent me a letter which can be given here only in substance. It is as under :

"I am a married man. I had gone out to a foreign country had a friend whom both I and my parents implicitly trusted. During my absence he seduced my wife who has now conceived of him. My father now insists that the girl should resort to abortion, otherwise, he says, the family would be disgraced. To me it seems that it would be wrong to do so. The poor woman is consumed with remorse She cares neither to eat nor drink, but is always weeping. Will you kindly tell me as to what my duty is in the case ?"

I have published this letter with great hesitation. As everybody knows, such cases are by no means unfrequent in society. A restrained public discussion of the question, therefore, does not seem to me to be out of place.

It seems to me clear as daylight that abortion would be a crime. Countless husbands are guilty of the same lapse as this poor woman, but nobody ever questions them. Society not only excuses them but does not even censure them. Then, again, the woman cannot conceal her shame while man can successfully hide his sin.

The woman in question deserves to be pitied. It would be the sacred duty of the husband to bring up the baby with all the love and tenderness that he is capable of and to refuse to yield to the counsels of his father. Whether he should continue to live with his wife is a ticklish question. Circumstances may warrant separation from her. In that case he would be bound to provide for her maintenance and education and to help her to live a pure life. Nor should I see anything wrong in his accepting her repentance if it is sincere and genuine. Nay, further, I can imagine a situation when it would be the sacred duty of the husband, to take back an erring wife who has completely expiated for and redeemed her error.

who is the victim of the youth's attentions, although she regards him as absolutely pure and brotherly, does not like them, even protests against them, but is too weak to resist his action. The self-introspection induced by the the event resulted, within two or three days of the reading of the correspondence, in the renunciation of the practice, and I announced it to the inmates of the Wardha Ashram on the 12th instant. It was not without a pang that I came to the decision. Never has an impure thought entered my being during or owing to the practice. My act has always been open. I believe that my act was that of a parent and has enabled the numerous girls under my guidance and wardship to give their confidences which perhaps no 'one else has enjoyed in the same measure. Whilst I do not believe in a *brahma-charya* which ever requires a wall of protection against the touch of the opposite sex and will fail if exposed to the least temptation, I am not unaware of the dangers attendant upon the freedom I have taken.

The discovery quoted by me has, therefore, prompted me to renounce the practice, however pure it may have been in itself. Every act of mine is scrutinized by thousands of men and women, as I am conducting an experiment requiring ceaseless vigilance. I must avoid doing things which may require a reasoned defence. My example was never meant to be followed by all and sundry. The young man's case has come upon me as a warning. I have taken it in the hope that my renunciation will set right those who may have erred, whether under the influence of my example or without it. Innocent youth is a priceless possession, not to be squandered away for the sake of a momentary excitement, miscalled pleasure. And let the weak girls like the one in this picture be strong enough to resist the approaches, though they may be declared to be innocent, of young men who are either knaves or who do not know what they are doing.

Hanjan, 21-9-1935

likely that the world would have heard little of it but for the overanxiety of one of the friends who, on seeing me indisposed, sent a sensational note to Jamnalalji who gathered together all the medical talent that was available in Wardha, and sent messages to Nagpur and Bombay for further help.

The day I collapsed, I had a warning on rising in the morning that there was some unusual pain about the neck, but I made light of it and never mentioned it to anybody. I continued to go through the daily programme. The final stroke was a most exhausting and serious conversation I had with a friend whilst I was having the daily evening stroll. The nerves had already been sufficiently taxed during the preceding fortnight, with the consideration and solution of problems which for me were quite as big and as important as, say, the paramount question of Swaraj.

Even if no fuss had been made over the collapse, I would have taken nature's peremptory warning to heart, given myself moderate rest and tided over the difficulty. But looking back upon the past, I feel that it was well that the fuss was made. The extraordinary precaution advised by the medical friends and equally extraordinary care taken by the two gaolers, enforced on me the exacting rest which I would not have taken and which allowed ample time for introspection. Not only have I profited by it, but the introspection has revealed vital defects in my following out of the interpretation of the *Gita* as I have understood it. I have discovered that I have not approached with adequate detachment, the innumerable problems that have presented themselves for solution. It is clear that I have taken many of them to heart and allowed them to rouse my emotional being and thus affect my nerves. In other words, they have not, as they should have, in a votary of the *Gita*, left my body or mind untouched. I verily believe that one who literally follows the prescription of the eternal mother, need never grow old in mind. Such a one's body will wither in due course like leaves of a healthy tree, leaving

ashamed of them, as I should be of hiding them from the public. My faith in the message of the *Gita* is as bright as ever. Unwearied, ceaseless effort is the price that must be paid for turning that faith into rich infallible experience. But the same *Gita* says without any equivocation that the experience is not to be had without divine grace. We should develop swelled heads if Divinity had not made that ample reservation.

*Han,an*, 29-2-1928

## HOW NON-VIOLENCE WORKS

A Congress leader said to me the other day, in the course of our conversations, "How is it that in quality, the Congress is not what it used to be in 1920-25? It has deteriorated. Ninety per cent of the members are not carrying out the Congress discipline. Can you not do something to mend this state of things?"

The question is apposite and timely. I can't shirk responsibility by saying, 'I am no longer in the Congress. I have gone out of it for the purpose of serving it better.' I know that I still influence the Congress policy. As the author of the Congress constitution of 1920, I must hold myself responsible for such deterioration as is avoidable.

The Congress started with an initial handicap in 1920. Very few believed in truth and non-violence as a creed. Most members accepted them as a policy. It was inevitable. I had hoped that many would accept them as their creed after they had watched the working of the Congress under the new policy. Only some did, not many. In the beginning stages, the change that came over the foremost leaders was profound. Readers will recall the letters from the late Pandit Motilal Nehru and Deshbandhu Das reproduced in the *Young India*. They had experienced a new joy and a new hope in a life of self-denial, simplicity and self-sacrifice. The Ali Brothers

life, strict vigilance and ceaseless application produce. This is impossible without the observance of *brahmacharya*. It must be as full as it is humanly possible. *Brahmacharya* here does not mean mere physical self-control. It means much more. It means complete control over all the senses. Thus an impure thought is a breach of *brahmacharya*; so is anger. All power comes from the preservation and sublimation of the vitality that is responsible for creation of life. If the vitality is husbanded instead of being dissipated, it is transmuted into creative energy of the highest order. This vitality is continuously and even unconsciously dissipated by evil, or even rambling, disorderly, unwanted thoughts. And since thought is the root of all speech and action, the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence perfectly controlled thought is itself power of the highest potency and can become self-acting. That seems to me to be the meaning of the silent prayer of the heart. If man is after the image of God, he has but to will a thing in the limited sphere allotted to him and it becomes. Such power is impossible in one who dissipates his energy in any way whatsoever, even as steam kept in a leaky pipe yields no power. The sexual act divorced from the deliberate purpose of generation is a typical and gross form of dissipation and has therefore been specially and rightly chosen for condemnation. But in one who has to organize vast masses of mankind for non-violent action, the full control described by me has to be attempted and virtually achieved.

This control is unattainable save by the grace of God. There is a verse in the second chapter of the *Gita* which freely rendered means "Sense-effects remain in abeyance whilst one is fasting or whilst the particular sense is starved; but the hankering does not cease except when one sees God face to face." This control is not mechanical or temporary. Once attained it is never lost. In that state vital energy is stored up without any chance of escaping by the innumerable outlets.

of my definition. I have not acquired that control over my thoughts that I need for my researches in non-violence. If my non-violence is to be contagious and infectious, I must acquire greater control over my thoughts. There is perhaps a flaw somewhere which accounts for the apparent failure of leadership adverted to in the opening sentence of this writing.

My faith in non-violence remains as strong as ever. I am quite sure that not only should it answer all our requirements in our country, but that it should, if properly applied, prevent the bloodshed that is going on outside India and is threatening to overwhelm the Western world.

My aspiration is limited. God has not given me the power to guide the world on the path of non-violence. But I have imagined that He has chosen me as His instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her many ills. The progress already made is great. But much more remains to be done. And yet I seem to have lost the power to evoke the needed response from Congressmen in general. It is a bad carpenter who quarrels with his tools. It is a bad general who blames his men for faulty workmanship. I know I am not a bad general. I have wisdom enough to know my limitations. God will give me strength enough to declare my bankruptcy if such is to be my lot. He will perhaps take me away when I am no longer wanted for the work which I have been permitted to do for nearly half a century. But I do entertain the hope that there is yet work for me to do, that the darkness that seems to have enveloped me will disappear, and that, whether, with another battle more brilliant than the Dandi March or without, India will come to her own demonstrably through non-violent means. I am praying for the light that will dispel the darkness. Let those who have a living faith in non-violence join me in the prayer.

continued to murmur something till we were within hearing distance. We knew that it was aimed at us. We felt hurt and uneasy. There was no crowd on the road. Before we had gone a few paces the cyclist returned. We recognized him at once whilst he was still at a respectful distance. He wheeled towards us, heaven knows whether he had intended to get down or merely pass by us. We felt that we were in danger. We had no faith in our physical prowess. I myself am weaker than the average girl. But in my hands I had a big book. Somehow or other courage came to me all of a sudden. I hurled the heavy book at the cycle and roared out, 'Dare you repeat your pranks?' He could with difficulty keep his balance, put on speed and fled from us. Now if I had not flung the book at his cycle, he might have harassed us by his filthy language to the end of our journey. This was an ordinary, perhaps insignificant, occurrence; but I wish you could come to Lahore and listen to the difficulties of us unfortunate girls. You would surely discover proper solution. First of all, tell me how, in the circumstances mentioned above, can girls apply the principle of *ahimsa* and save themselves. Secondly, what is the remedy for curing youth of the abominable habit of insulting womenfolk? You would not suggest that we should wait and suffer till a new generation, taught from childhood to be polite to their womenfolk, comes into being. The Government is either unwilling or unable to deal with this social evil. The big leaders have no time for such questions. Some, when they hear of a girl bravely castigating ill-behaved youth, say, 'Well done. That is the way all girls should behave.' Sometimes a leader is found eloquently lecturing against such misbehaviour of students. But no one applies himself continuously to the solution of this serious problem. You will be painfully surprised to know that during Diwali and such other holidays, newspapers come out with notices warning women from venturing outdoors even to see the illuminations. This one fact should enable you to know to what straits we are reduced in this part of the world. Neither the writers nor the readers of such warnings have any sense of shame that they should have to be issued."

Another Punjabi girl to whom I gave the letter to read, supports the narrative from her own experiences of her college days and tells me that what my correspondent has related is the common experience of most girls.

The other letter from an experienced woman relates the experiences of her girl friends in Lucknow. They are molested in cinema theatres by boys sitting in the row behind them, using all kinds of language which I can only call indecent. They are stated to resort even

nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary. The non-violent way is not for such girls. I have often remarked in these columns that definite rules govern the development of the non-violent spirit in us. It is a strenuous effort. It marks a revolution in the way of thinking and living. If my correspondent and the girls of her way of thinking will revolutionize their life in the prescribed manner, they will soon find that young men, who at all come in contact with them, will learn to respect them and to put on their best behaviour in their presence. But if perchance they find, as they may, that their very chastity is in danger of being violated, they must develop courage enough to die rather than yield to the brute in man. It has been suggested that a girl who is gagged or bound so as to make her powerless even for struggling, cannot die as easily as I seem to think. I venture to assert that a girl who has the will to resist can burst all the bonds that may have been used to render her powerless. The resolute will gives her the strength to die.

But this heroism is possible only for those who have trained themselves for it. Those who have not a living faith in non-violence will learn the art of ordinary self-defence and protect themselves from indecent behaviour of unchivalrous youth.

The great question, however, is why should young men be devoid of elementary good manners so as to make decent girls be in perpetual fear of molestation from them? I should be sorry to discover that the majority of young men have lost all sense of chivalry. But they should, as a class, be jealous of their reputation and deal with every case of impropriety occurring among their mates. They must learn to hold the honour of every woman as dear as that of their own sisters and mothers. All the education they receive will be in vain if they do not learn good manners.

And is it not as much the concern of professors and schoolmasters to ensure gentlemanliness among their pupils as to prepare them for the subjects prescribed for the class-room?

*Harijan*, 31-12-1938

forty years ago when perhaps none of them was born. I hold myself to be incapable of writing anything derogatory to womanhood. My regard for the fair sex is too great to permit me to think ill of them. She is, what she has been described to be in English, the better half of mankind. And my article was written to expose students' shame, not to advertise the frailties of girls. But in giving the diagnosis of the disease, I was bound if I was to prescribe the right remedy, to mention all the factors which induced the disease.

The modern girl has a special meaning. Therefore there was no question of my restricting the scope of my remark to some. But all the girls who receive English education are not modern girls. I know many who are not at all touched by the 'modern girl' spirit. But there are some who have become modern girls. My remark was meant to warn India's girl students against copying the modern girl and complicating a problem that has become a serious menace. For, at the time I received the letter referred to, I received also a letter from an Andhra girl student bitterly complaining of the behaviour of Andhra students which, from the description given, is worse than what was described by the Lahore girl. This daughter of Andhra tells me that the simple dress of her girl friends gives them no protection, but they lack the courage to expose the barbarism of the boys who are a disgrace to the institution they belong to. I commend this complaint to the authorities of the Andhra University.

The eleven girls I invite to initiate a crusade against the rude behaviour of students. God helps only those who help themselves. The girls must learn the art of protecting themselves against the ruffianly behaviour of man.

weaker sex I do not know. If the implication is that she lacks the brute instinct of man or does not possess it in the same measure as man, the charge may be admitted. But then woman becomes, as she is, the nobler sex. If she is weak in striking, she is strong in suffering. I have described woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and *ahimsa*. She has to learn not to rely on man to protect her virtue or her honour. I do not know a single instance of a man having ever protected the virtue of a woman. He cannot even if he would. Rama certainly did not protect the virtue of Sita, nor the five Pandavas of Draupadi. Both these noble women protected their own virtue by the sheer force of their purity. No person loses honour or self-respect but by his consent. A woman no more loses her honour or virtue because a brute renders her senseless and ravishes her than a man loses his because a wicked woman administers to him a stupefying drug and makes him do what she likes.

It is remarkable that there are no books written in praise of male beauty. But why should there always be literature to excite the animal passions of man? May it be that woman like to live up to the titles that man has chosen to bestow upon her? Does she like to have the beauty of her form exploited by man? Does she like to look beautiful of form before man, and why? These are questions I would like educated sisters to ask themselves. If these advertisements and literature offend them, they must wage a relentless war against them and they will stop them in a moment. Would that woman will realize the power she has latent in her for good, if she has also for mischief. It is in her power to make the world more livable both for her and her partner, whether as father, son or husband, if she would cease to think of herself as weak and fit only to serve as a doll for man to play with. If society is not to be destroyed by insane wars of nations against nations and still more insane wars on its moral foundations, the woman will have to play her part not manfully, as some are trying to do, but womanfully. She won't better humanity by vying with man in

to this party similarly If an editor must supervise the reading matter that he will allow, it is as much his duty to supervise the advertisements, and no editor can permit his paper to be used by people desirous of duping the simple villagers "

*Huayan*, 2-1-1937

## 47

## FAMINES AND BIRTH RATE

Major Gen. Sir John McGaw, President, India Office Medical Board, is reported by a correspondent to have said :

" Famines in India will recur, in fact India is today facing perpetual famine. Unless something is done to decrease the birth rate in India, the country will be leading straight for a calamity "

The correspondent asks what I have to say on this grave issue.

For me, this and some other ways of explaining away famines in India, is to divert the attention from the only cause of recurring famines in this benighted land. I have stated and repeat here that famines of India are not a calamity descended upon us from nature but is a calamity created by the rulers — whether through ignorant indifference or whether consciously or otherwise does not matter. Prevention against draught is not beyond human effort and ingenuity. Such effort has not proved ineffective in other countries. In India a sustained intelligent effort has never been made.

The bogey of increasing birth rate is not a new thing. It has been often trotted out. Increase in population is not and ought not to be regarded as a calamity to be avoided. Its regulation or restriction by artificial methods is a calamity of the first grade whether we know it or not. It is bound to degrade the race, if it becomes universal, which, thank God, it is never likely to be. Pestilence, wars and famines are cursed antidotes against cursed lust which is responsible for unwanted children. If we would avoid this three-fold curse we

even danger of moral perversion for the couple concerned. Exceptional men and women will refuse to be bound in marriage. Those who desire marriage are of the ordinary run of human beings. It is good that the particular bridegroom made it clear later on that he could not deny to his wife the right of motherhood. This sentence really saved Gandhiji's face. One cannot expect anything other than hypocrisy in the guise of celibacy in marriage.

"Gandhiji ought to explain clearly the implications of the vow of celibacy until the attainment of Swaraj. To me it appears quite ridiculous."

It is deplorable that the correspondent seems to take it for granted that the main thing in marriage is the satisfaction of the sexual urge. Rightly speaking, the true purpose of marriage should be and is intimate friendship and companionship between man and woman. There is in it no room for sexual satisfaction. That marriage is no marriage which takes place for the satisfaction of the sex desire. That satisfaction is a denial of true friendship. I know of English marriages undertaken for the sake of companionship and mutual service. If a reference to my own married life is not considered irrelevant, I may say that my wife and I tested the real bliss of married life when we renounced sexual contact, and that, in the heyday of youth. It was then that our companionship blossomed and both of us were enabled to render real service to India and humanity in general. I have written about this in my "Experiments with Truth". Indeed this self-denial was born out of our great desire for service.

Of course, innumerable marriages take place in the natural course of event and such will continue. The physical side of married life is given pre-eminence in these. Innumerable persons eat in order to satisfy the palate; but such indulgence does not therefore become one's duty. Very few eat to live but they are the ones who really know the law of eating. Similarly, those only

## HOW DID I BEGIN IT ?

Readers must have noticed that last week I started writing for the *Harjan*. How long I shall be able to continue it, I do not know. God's will be done in this as in other things.

When I think of it, the circumstances under which I stopped writing for the *Harjan* have not altered. Pyarelalji is far away from me and, in my opinion is doing very important work in Noakhali. He is taking part in what I have called *Mahayagna*. Parsuramji, the English typist who had become used to the work has gone to Ahmedabad of his own choice to help Jivanji. Kanu Gandhi was of much help, but he is also taking part in the *Mahayagna* of Noakhali. Most of the other helpers are also unable to help under the stress of circumstances or other causes. To resume writing for the *Harjan* under these adverse conditions would be ordinarily considered madness. But what appears unpractical from the ordinary standpoint is feasible under divine guidance. I believe I dance to the divine tune. If this is delusion, I treasure it.

Who is this Divinity? I would love to discuss the question, only not today.

The question that is foremost with us all, I discuss every evening after the prayer. This writing will come before the readers after seven days. This interval would be considered too long in connection with the pressing problem. Therefore, in these columns for the moment, I must confine myself to things of eternal value. One such is *brahmacharya*. The world seems to be running after things of transitory value. It has no time for the other. And yet when one thinks a little deeper, it becomes clear that it is the things eternal that count in the end.

What is *brahmacharya*? It is the way of life which leads us to Brahma (God). It includes full control over the process of reproduction. The control must be in

breach of *brahmacharya* excites wrath and worse. There must be something seriously wrong with a society in which values are exaggerated and underestimated. Moreover, to use the word *brahmacharya* in a narrow sense is to detract from its value. Such detraction increases the difficulty of proper observance. When it is isolated, even the elementary observance becomes difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, it is essential that all the disciplines should be taken as one. This enables one to realize the full meaning and significance of *brahmacharya*.

Haridān 8-6-1947

## 50

## WALLS OF PROTECTION

Let us ask ourselves what walls should be erected to protect *brahmacharya* of which I wrote last week. The answer seems clear. It is not *brahmacharya* that needs walls of protection. To say this is easy enough and sounds sweet. But it is difficult to understand the import of the statement and more so to act accordingly.

It is true that he who has attained perfect *brahmacharya* does not stand in need of protecting walls. But the aspirant undoubtedly needs them, even as a young mango plant has need of a strong fence round it. A child goes from its mother's lap to the cradle and from the cradle to the push-cart, till he becomes a man who has learnt to walk without aid. To cling to the aid when it is needless is surely harmful.

I made it clear last week that *brahmacharya* is one of the eleven observances. It follows, therefore, that the real aid to *brahmacharya* are the remaining ten observances. The difference between them and the walls of protection is that the latter are temporary, the former permanent. They are an integral part of *brahmacharya*.

*Brahmacharya* is a mental condition. The outward behaviour of a man is at once the sign and proof of the

and *ghee*, I would gladly renounce all animal products. But this is another story.

A perfect *brahmachari* never loses his vital fluid. Or the contrary, he is able to increase it day by day and, what is more, he conserves it; he will, therefore, never become old in the accepted sense and his intellect will never be dimmed.

It appears to me that even the true aspirant does not need the above-mentioned restraints. *Brahmacharya* is not a virtue that can be cultivated by outward restraints. He who runs away from a necessary contact with a woman, does not understand the full meaning of *brahmacharya*.

Let not the reader imagine for one moment that what I have written is to serve as the slightest encouragement to life without the law of real restraint. Nor is there room in any honest attempt for hypocrisy.

Self-indulgence and hypocrisy are sins to be avoided.

The true *brahmachari* will shun false restraints. He must create his own fences according to his limitations, breaking them down when he feels that they are unnecessary. The first thing is to know what true *brahmacharya* is, then to realize its value and lastly to try to cultivate this priceless virtue. I hold that true service of the country demands this observance.

*Harjan*, 15-6-1947.

field, but they are of no use to the aspirant after *brahmacharya*. English men and women who tread the difficult path are not afflicted by the imaginings of the correspondent quoted above. Those whom I have in mind have their God enthroned in their hearts. They are neither self-deceived nor would they deceive others. To them their sisters and mothers are ever thus and for them all women are in the place of sisters and mothers. It never occurs to them that every contact with them is sinful or that it is fraught with danger. They see in all women the same God they see in themselves. It will betray lack of humility to say that such specimens do not exist because we have not come across them. Lack of belief in the possibility would also amount to lowering the standard of *brahmacharya*. There is as much error in saying that there is no God because we have not seen Him face to face or because we have not met men who have had that experience, as there is in rejecting the possibilities of *brahmacharya* because our own evidence is to the contrary.

Harjan, 6-7-1947

man and woman. May not her son sit side by side with his mother or the man share the same bench in a train with his sister ? He who suffers excitement through such juxtaposition is surely worthy of pity.

Although I believe that for the sake of social good one should abandon many things, I feel that there is room for wise discretion even in the observance of such restraints. In Europe there is a society of men which advocates stark nakedness. I was asked to join that society and I refused to do so. My objection was that the proposition was intolerable and that unless a measure of self-control had become an established fact, the exhibition of nakedness was not desirable. This I said although I believe that theoretically speaking, there is nothing harmful in both the sexes going about in utter nakedness. It is said that in their state of innocence Adam and Eve had not even a fig leaf to cover their nakedness. But immediately they became aware of their nakedness, they began to cover themselves and were hurled from Paradise. Are we not in that inherited fallen state ? If we were to forget that, we would surely harm ourselves. I consider this an instance of observing prohibition for the sake of social good.

Contrarywise, for the very sake of society it was just and proper to give up untouchability although it was fashionable among people of accepted merit. Marriage of nine-year-old girls used to be defended on the ground of social good. So was prohibition against crossing the seas. Such instances can be multiplied. Every custom has to be examined on its own merits.

Restraints must not be such as to perpetuate sex-consciousness. In most of our daily transactions such consciousness is absent. Such occasion, so far as I am aware, is only one. If the consciousness afflicted us the whole day long, we should be considered to have a corrupt mind and such a mind is not conducive to social welfare. If the villagers were continuously sex-conscious, they would be useless for advancement of self and society.

# SELF-RESTRAINT V. SELF-INDULGENCE

## PART II

EXTRACTS FROM MAHADEV DESAI'S  
WEEKLY LETTERS

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF MARRIED LIFE

The annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh at Hubli, disturbed by incessant rain, was important for various reasons. I propose to speak of it at length in the next issue. I am going to confine myself in this issue to the two marriages and sacred thread ceremonies we had under the blessings of the members of the Sangh. For me it is a matter of personal gratefulness that prompts me to write these lines. But there were about these apparently private ceremonies things in which the public are likely to be interested, and I therefore make no apology for occupying a part of these columns.

The Sangh itself is an ethical body—a body of public workers who approach the problems of work in a predominantly religious spirit, and their discussions are always full of self-introspection. It was in the fitness of things that Gandhiji decided to perform the marriage ceremonies of his grand-daughter and my sister and the thread ceremonies of my brother and son under the auspices of the Sangh. Nothing could contribute better to the understanding, on the part of the young parties concerned, of the seriousness of the life on which they were about to embark,—above all to a conviction that the ceremonies were no festivities but solemn consecration ceremonies. All outward show and ceremony was eschewed, no invitations to friends or relations were issued, and the parties came in the conviction that they would prize much more the blessings of a body of serious-minded, self-sacrificing public workers than the blessings of relations and friends which they should get as a matter of course. The ceremonies were performed by two *Shastris*, Shastri Rambhatji of Belgaum and Shastri Laxman Joshi of the famous Prajna Pathashala at Wai, who offered their services without the thought of a reward. They knew the meaning of every part of the ceremonies, and Shri

"I would also ask you to disabuse yourselves of another superstition which is rampant nowadays. It is being said that restraint and abstinence are wrong and free satisfaction of the sexual appetite and free love is the most natural thing. There was never a more ruinous superstition. You may be incapable of attaining the ideal, your flesh may be weak; but do not therefore lower the ideal, do not make irreligion your religion. In your weak moments remember what I am telling you. The remembrance of this solemn occasion may well steady and restrain you. The very purpose of marriage is restraint and sublimation of the sexual passion. If there is any other purpose, marriage is no consecration, but marriage for other purposes besides having progeny.

"You are being united in marriage as friends and equals. If the husband is called *svamin*, the wife is *svaminī*—each master of the other, each helpmate of the other, each co-operating with the other in the performance of life's tasks and duties. To you, boys, I would say that if you are gifted with better intellects and richer emotions, infect the girls with them. Be their true teachers and guides, help them and guide them, but never hinder them or misguide them. Let there be complete harmony of thought and word and deed between you, may you have no secrets from each other, may you be one in soul.

"Don't be hypocrites, don't break your health in the vain effort of performing what may be impossible for you. Restraint never ruins one's health. What ruins one's health is not restraint but outward suppression. A really self-restrained person grows every day from strength to strength and from peace to more peace. The very first step in self-restraint is the restraint of thoughts. Understand your limitations and do only as much as you can. I have placed the ideal before you—the right angle. Try as best you can to attain the right angle. But if you fail, there is no cause for grief or shame. I have simply explained to you that marriage is a consecration, a new birth, even as the sacred thread ceremony is a consecration and a new birth. Let not what I have told

had a handful of men and women prepared to abide by the Law, we should have a race of men and women stalwart and true.

"Remember that I really came to enjoy my married life after I ceased to look at Ba sexually. I took the vow of abstinence when I was in the prime of youth and health, when I was young enough to enjoy married life in the accepted sense of the term. I saw in a flash that I was born, as we all are, for a sacred mission. I did not know this when I was married. But on coming to my senses I felt that I must see that the marriage subserved the mission for which I was born. Then indeed did I realize true *dharmā*. True happiness came into our lives only after the vow was taken. Ba, though she looks frail, has a fine constitution and toils from morning until night. She would never have done so, had she continued to be the object of my lust.

"And yet I woke up late in the sense that I had lived the married life for some years. You are lucky enough to be aroused in good time. Circumstances, when I was married, were as unpropitious as they could be. For you they are as propitious as they could be. There was one thing, though, that I possessed and that carried me through. It was the armour of truth. That protected me and saved me. Truth has been the very foundation of my life. *Brahmacharya* and *ahimsa* were born later out of truth. Whatever, therefore, you do, be true to yourselves and to the world. Hide not your thoughts. If it is shameful to reveal them, it is more shameful to think them."

form of birth control there is no salvation. You would do it in one way, I would do it in another. I advocate your method as well, but not in all cases. You seem to regard a beautiful function as something objectionable. Two animals are nearest to the divine when they are going to create new life. There is something very beautiful in the act."

"Here again you are labouring under a confusion," said Gandhiji. "The creation of a new life is nearest the divine, I agree. All I want is that one should approach that act in a divine way. That is to say, man and woman must come together with no other desire than that of creating a new life. But if they come together merely to have a fond embrace, they are nearest the devil. Man unfortunately forgets that he is nearest the divine, hankers after the brute instinct in himself and becomes less than the brute."

"But why must you cast aspersions on the brute?"

"I do not. The brute fulfils the law of his own nature. The lion in his majesty is a noble creature and he has a perfect right to eat me up; but I have none to develop paws and pounce upon you. Then I lower myself and become worse than the brute."

"I am sorry," said Mrs. How-Martyn, "I have expressed myself very badly. I confess that in a majority of cases it is not going to be their salvation, but a factor which will conduce to higher life. You understand what I mean, though I am afraid I have not been able to make myself quite clear."

"Oh, no. I do not want to take any undue advantage of you. But I want you to understand my viewpoint. Do not run away with misconceptions. Man must choose either of the two courses, the upward or the downward; but as he has the brute in him, he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful garb. Man easily capitulates when sin is presented in the garb of virtue, and that is what Marie Stopes and others are doing. If I were to popularize the religion

As I listened to the rapturous discourse, which other engagements had to bring to an end, I was reminded of the great words of St. Francis of Assisi. "Light looked down and beheld darkness. 'Thither will I go,' said Light. Peace looked down and beheld War; 'Thither will I go,' said Peace. Love looked down and beheld Hatred; 'Thither will I go,' said Love—and the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us."

*Harijan*, 1-2-1935

### III

#### PROBLEM OF BIRTH CONTROL

But how the villager and the villages haunt Gandhiji's days and dreams, will appear most vividly in a discourse that he had with Swami Yoganand, who has just returned home after a long stay in America. On his way to Ranchi he halted here for a couple of days and had long conversations with Gandhiji. His mission in America was purely spiritual and he said he had tried everywhere to show by preaching and example the spiritual message of India to the world. It is his conviction that 'Crucified India will mean the salvation of the world.'

Two problems he wanted to discuss with Gandhiji—the problem of Evil and the problem of Birth Control. He had seen a good deal of the seamy side of American life and knew Judge Lindsay intimately. . . .

'I shall now change the subject,' said the Swami. 'You would prefer self-control to birth control?'

'I think artificial birth control or birth control according to methods suggested today and recommended in the West is suicidal. When I say 'suicidal', I do not mean resulting in the extinction of the race; I mean suicidal in a higher sense of the term, that is to say, these methods make man lower than the brute; they are immoral.'

'I do not think that we are more spiritually-minded than the West. If we were, we should not have fallen so low. But because the average life of a Westerner is much higher than ours, it does not prove the spirituality of the West. Whoever is spiritually-minded must show a better, not necessarily a longer, life.'

*Harnan, 7-9-1935*

#### IV

### MRS. SANGER AND BIRTH CONTROL

#### IN SEVERAL ASPECTS

Since the time Mrs. Margaret Sanger, the famous leader of the Birth Control movement, paid a visit to Wardha, I have seen several different aspects of her. First as she appeared to me there during those remarkable interviews with Gandhiji — interviews in which she appealed to Gandhiji as a great moral teacher "to advise something practical, something that can be applied to solve the problem of too frequent child-bearing," "to give some message for those who are not yet sure but who are anxious to limit their families." She seemed, during those conversations into which Gandhiji poured his whole being, desperately anxious to find out some point of contact with Gandhiji, to find out the utmost extent to which he could go with her. And he did indicate the extent. Her second aspect is revealed in her article in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* in which she ridicules what she calls Gandhiji's "amazing boast" of having known the experiences and the aspirations of thousands of women in India. "Mrs. Sanger approached Gandhiji in Wardha for solution of a tough problem, because, as she herself said, "there were thousands, millions, who regard your word as that of a saint," and yet she ridicules his claim to know these women's aspirations and experiences," thousands of whom marched to jail at his word. All she is concerned about in

India — the appeal to resist their husbands. Well, this is what he said: "My wife I made the orbit of all women. In her I studied all women. I came in contact with many European women in South Africa, and I knew practically every Indian woman there. I worked with them. I tried to show them they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, not only in the political field but in the domestic as well. But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands. The remedy is in the hands of women themselves. The struggle is difficult for them, and I do not blame them. I blame the men. Men have legislated against them. Man has regarded woman as his tool. She has learned to be his tool and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall the descent is easy . . . I have felt that during the years still left to me, if I can drive home to women's minds the truth that they are free, we will have no birth control problem in India. If they will only learn to say 'no' to their husbands when they approach them carnally, I do not suppose all husbands are brutes, and if women only know how to resist them, all will be well. I have been able to teach women who have come in contact with me how to resist their husbands. The real problem is that many do not want to resist them . . . No resistance bordering upon bitterness will be necessary in 99 out of 100 cases. If a wife says to her husband, 'No, I do not want it,' he will make no trouble. But she hasn't been taught. Her parents in most cases won't teach it to her. There are some cases, I know, in which parents have appealed to their daughters' husbands not to force motherhood on their daughters. And I have come across amenable husbands too I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it."

What is there in this to show that Gandhiji did not know the women of India or did not know women, I do not understand. Jesus, who set the seal of his own blood upon his precept "Love thine enemy", and "Resist not evil", would be held to have uttered the

frequency can occur during the nine months of a woman's pregnancy ? " I must say that in advancing this argument Mrs. Sanger is less than fair to her own sex. None but the most abnormally lewd or suppressed would submit to even legitimate sexual advances during pregnancy.

What was to be done with couples who wanted to resist the impulse of sex and yet could not do so ?

#### SEX-LOVE AND SEX-LUST

Mrs. Sanger was thus led on to her apotheosis of "sex-love", which she said "is a relationship which makes for oneness, for completeness between husband and wife and contributes to a finer understanding and a greater spiritual harmony." An obviously harmless proposition, but full of confusion when in the same breath one identifies love with lust and then tries to separate the one from the other. The distinction that Gandhiji drew between love and lust will be evident from the following extracts from the conversation :

G. : When both want to satisfy animal passion without having to suffer the consequences of their act it is not love, it is lust. But if love is pure, it will transcend animal passion and will regulate itself. We have not had enough education of the passions. When a husband says, "Let us not have children, but let us have relations," what is that but animal passion ? If they do not want to have more children, they should simply refuse to unite. Love becomes lust the moment you make it a means for the satisfaction of animal needs. It is just the same with food. If food is taken only for pleasure, it is lust. You do not take chocolates for the sake of satisfying your hunger. You take them for pleasure and then ask the doctor for an antidote. Perhaps you will tell the doctor that whisky befogs your brain and he gives you an antidote. Would it not be better not to take chocolates or whisky ?

Mrs. S. : No. I do not accept the analogy.

G. : Of course you will not accept the analogy because you think this sex expression without desire

affair. 'Gandhiji's own personal witness made no impression upon her. She dismissed it as that 'of an 'idealist', as appears from her veiled sneer at "that small group of idealists who have sublimated their sex energies into creative action, into the activities of his own National Congress." I do not think during all his conversation Gandhiji even once referred to the Congress or Congressmen. Mrs. Sanger forgets that all moral advancement has proceeded on the practice of a "small group of idealists" and that even the apparent progress of her own movement depends a lot on the clever way in which she idealizes her nostrum and describes it as the upward path "demanding of us who inhabit this globe all that we possess in intelligence, knowledge, courage, vision and responsibility," the road that "leads to the fulfilment of human destiny on this planet!"

#### A POSSIBLE WAY OUT

Mrs. Sanger is so impatient to prove that Gandhiji is a visionary that she forgets the practical ways and means that Gandhiji suggested to her.

"Must the sexual union take place only three or four times in an entire lifetime?" she asked.

"Why should people not be taught," replied Gandhiji, "that it is immoral to have more than three or four children and that after they have had that number they should sleep separately? If they are taught this, it would harden into custom. And if social reformers cannot impress this idea upon the people, why not a law? If husband and wife have four children, they would have had sufficient animal enjoyment. Their love may then be lifted to a higher plane. Their bodies have met. After they have had the children they wanted, their love transforms itself into a spiritual relationship. If these children die and they want more, then they may meet again. Why must people be slaves of this passion when they are not of others? When you give them education in birth control, you tell them it is a duty. You say to them that if they do not do this thing, they will interrupt

force within human nature itself." She forgets that contraceptives will provide the most infernal engine of that waste and misuse.

But I have come across in her address a startling argument which would take away from the seriousness of all her arguments. "Japan is breaking her own record for population increase ! The whole crisis in the Far East — so menacing to the peace of the world at large — grows out of this 'full speed ahead' cradle competition between Asiatic races. Is it not time for the League of Nations or the World Court to turn on this red traffic light ? Japan's determination to find an outlet for this surplus population precipitates the so-called 'undeclared war' against the Chinese, the creation of the puppet State of Manchukuo, the breaking of solemn treaties, the sowing of the seeds of another World War." Another yellow peril ? Is it a humanitarian that speaks here, or someone vastly different therefrom ? I wonder.

Hanjan, 25-1-1936

\*

\*

\*

## MRS. SANGER'S LETTER

Mrs. Sanger has sent me a letter which I must publish in fairness to her :

Dear Mr. Desai,

In your article giving out the interview between Mr. Gandhi and myself you say that in my article in the *Illustrated Weekly* I wrote only on one point of the conversation. In this you are quite correct. That was all I meant to give out or to discuss in that article.

May I also say that before I sent the article I read it to a dear and loyal friend of yours and Mr. Gandhi's, Muriel Lester, who was the one who suggested what you called a "veiled sneer". Please be assured that I have only the highest regard and respect for all those brave men and women who are working for India's freedom. If you will look up my own record, you will find my name among that first group of men and women in America who in 1917 organized themselves to help over there for the freedom of India here.

The next point in your article in which I think you are also in error is that you seem to indicate that Mr. Gandhi accepted in

bravely and selflessly for her cause. But there is absolutely no untruth in the statement that there is altogether too much of unseemly propaganda about birth control and all kinds of contraceptives and attractive-looking but shoddy literature which is the stock-in-trade of the average birth control enthusiast. All this serves but to vitiate the cause which Mrs. Sanger is espousing selflessly.

*Harijan*, 22-2-1936

# V

## WRONG APOTHEOSIS OF WOMEN\*

Gandhiji next dwelt on a topic on which he had spoken in the Subjects Committee, but could not have any resolution thereon as he did not find the proper atmosphere. The occasion was a letter addressed to him by the ladies in charge of a women's movement called *Jyoti Santh*. The letter enclosed copy of a resolution they had passed condemning the present-day tendencies in literature regarding the presentation of women. There was, Gandhiji felt, considerable force in the complaint, and he said : "The gravamen of their charge is that the present-day writers give an entirely false picture of women. They are exasperated at the sickly sentimentality with which you delineate them, at the vulgar way in which you dwell on their physical form. Does all their beauty and their strength lie in their physical form, in their capacity to please the lustful eye of men ? Why, the writers of the letter justly ask, should we be eternally represented as meek, submissive women for whom all the menial jobs of the household are reserved, and whose only duties are their husbands ? Why are they not delineated as they really are ? We are, they say, neither aetherial damsels, nor dolls nor bundles

\* From an account of the proceedings of the Gujarat Literary Conference held at Ahmedabad in November, 1936.

## Appendix I

### GENERATION AND REGENERATION \*

(By William Loftus Hare)

#### I GENERATION IN BIOLOGY

Microscopic observation of unicellular life has revealed the fact that in the lowest forms reproduction takes place by fission. Growth follows on nourishment until the maximum size for the species is reached, and then the organism divides its nucleus into two, and soon afterwards its body. Given the normal conditions—water and nourishment—this appears to exhaust its functions, but in the case of denial of these conditions there is sometimes observed a reconjunction of two cells, from which rejuvenation but not reproduction may result.

In multicellular life there is nourishment and growth as in the life below it, but a new phenomenon is observed. The group of cells constituting the body are mostly differentiated to separate functions: some for obtaining nourishment, some for its distributions, some for locomotion and some for protection, as for instance, the skin. The primitive function of fission is abandoned by those to whom new duties are assigned, but is preserved by those cells which occupy a more interior position in the organism. These are guarded and served by the others which have undergone varied differentiation, while they themselves remain as they were. They divide as before, but *within* the multicellular body, and at length some are extruded from it. They have, however, gained a new power, instead of dividing in two as their ancestors did, they undergo segmentation or multiplication of nuclei without separation. This process continues until the organism has reached the normal size and structure of its multicellular species. But in the body we may observe a new feature, the original deposit of germ-cells are not only or chiefly extruded for external reproduction, they themselves supply a continuous stream of fresh units from

---

\* Reprinted from *The Open Court* (Chicago), March, 1926.

progresses, each time it gives birth to offspring it is or may be in itself in a higher state of organization than it was before, consequently its offspring will be able to reach the normal point of development attained by its parent. The length of the reproduction period for each species and each individual will differ, but ideally it extends from maturity to approaching decline. Premature or decadent reproduction will secure an inferior offspring according to its dominant conditions. Here, then, we perceive a law for sexual ethic derived from physical conditions: the period when generation is most favourable to the reproduction of the species and to regeneration is full maturity only.

I pass by the history of the differentiation in sex which follows the hermaphrodite, because it is a fact which may be taken for granted. It is necessary to observe, however, a new condition that has made its appearance with the bi-sexual forms. Not only have the 'two halves' of the hermaphrodite become physically separate, but each continues to produce germ-cells independently of the other. The male continues the ancient, fundamental process of internal reproduction by the multiplication of germ-cells (which for external reproduction by extrusion and intrusion are known as *spermatozoa*) the female does likewise, reserving rather than extruding the ova for impregnation by the male germ-cells. In both cases regeneration is primary and absolutely necessary for the individual. Every moment of growth from conception onwards exhibits the increasing process of regeneration. At maturity in the human species generation may take place, but not necessarily for the good of the individual, only for the race. Here, as in the lower forms, if regeneration ceases or is imperfectly performed, disease or death will supervene. Here, too, there is rivalry of interest between the individual and the future race. If there be not superfluity, the use of the germ-cells for generative reproduction will deprive the process of regeneration (internal reproduction) of some of its material. As a matter of fact among civilized human beings sexual intercourse is practised vastly more than is necessary for the production of the next generation and is carried on at the expense of internal reproduction, bringing disease, death and more in its train.

separates, differentiates and segregates by a process that is purely mechanistic is inconceivable. True, these fundamental processes are so far removed from our present consciousness as to seem to be uncontrolled by the human or animal will. But a moment's reflection will show that just as the will of the fully developed human being directs his external movements and actions in accordance with the guidance of the intellect—this, indeed, being its function—so the earlier processes of the gradual organization of the body must, within the limits provided by environment, be allowed to be directed by a kind of will guided by a kind of intelligence. This is now known to psychologists as 'the unconscious'. It is a part of our self, disconnected from our normal daily thinking, but intensely awake and alert in regard to its own functions—so much so that it never for a moment subsides into sleep as the consciousness does.

The unconscious, then, is the vital force which superintends the complex processes of regeneration. Its first task is the segmentation of the impregnated ovum, and thereafter, until death, it continues to preserve its appropriate organism by absorbing and despatching the fundamental germ-cells to their respective stations. Though I here may seem to contradict many notable psychologists, I would say that the unconscious is only concerned with the individual and not with the species therefore, first with regeneration. Only in one sense can the unconscious be said to concern itself with the future generation to whatsoever state of organization its energy has brought the individual, that the unconscious seeks to conserve. But it cannot do the impossible, it cannot, even with the help of the conscious will, prolong life indefinitely. Therefore it reproduces itself by the impulse of sexual intercourse, in which it may be said the unconscious and the conscious wills unite. The gratification, normally, of sexual intercourse may be taken as a sign of there being some purpose to be served beyond that of the individual who eventually pays a price more heavy than he knows. This truth is expressed intuitively in the words of the Hebrew writer who puts a solemn warning into the divine lips: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. iii. 16).

the organism, sometimes the male and sometimes the female, not infrequently dies in continuing the life of the species. Survival of the individual after reproduction is a triumph of life that is not always attained—in some cases never. In his essay on death, Goette has well shown how closely and necessarily bound together are the facts of reproduction and death, which may both be described as katabolic crises. Patrick Geddes writes on this subject (p 255 *op cit*) "The association of death and reproduction is indeed patent enough, but the connection is in popular language usually misstated. Organisms, one hears, have to die, they must therefore reproduce, else the species would come to an end. But such emphasis on posterior utilities is almost always only an afterthought of our invention. The true statement, as far as history furnishes an answer, is not that they reproduce because they have to die, but that they die because they have to reproduce."

And Goette says briefly "It is not death that makes reproduction necessary, but reproduction has death as its inevitable consequence."

After giving a large number of instances Geddes concludes with these remarkable words "In the higher animals the fatality of the reproductive sacrifice has been greatly lessened, yet death may tragically persist, even in human life, as the direct nemesis of love. The temporarily exhausting effect of even moderate sexual indulgence is well-known, as well as the increased liability to all forms of disease while the physical energies are thus lowered."

This discussion may be summed up briefly and, I hope, conclusively by saying that in human life the sexual act is essentially katabolic (or a movement towards death) in the male and in parturition of the offspring it is katabolic for the female.

A whole chapter could be written on the effect of undue indulgence on the health of the body. Virility, old age, vitality and immunity from disease are the normal lot of nearly or quite continent persons. A proof of this, if a rather unpleasant one, is derived from the fact that a very large number of diseases in man have been and are cured by the artificial injection of *semen* into debilitated persons.

There may well be a resistance in the mind of the reader to accepting the conclusions offered in the present section of this

germ-cells, drawn from the deepest seat of life in continuous streams they are distributed and differentiated to the ganglia of the systems, and of course, in immense quantities to the brain. Withdrawal of germ-cells from their upward, regenerative course for generative or merely indulgent purposes, deprives the organs of their full replenishing stock of life, to their cost, slowly and ultimately. It is these physical facts which constitute the basis of a personal sexual ethic, counselling moderation if not restraint,—at any rate explaining the origin of restraint, as said above.

I do not hesitate to add to this section one illustration out of several which might be adduced, to show how closely in some philosophical systems continence is believed to minister to mental and spiritual vigour. I allude to the Indian system of *Yoga*. The reader may refer to any of the standard translations of Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* (that by James H. Woods in the Harvard Oriental Series is the best known to me) in order to test the brief statement I now make.

It is probably known to those who are familiar with Indian religious and social life that asceticism was and is still practised by the Hindus. Originally called *tapas*, it had two aims, one to maintain and increase the powers of the body and the other to transcend the normal powers of the mind. Traditionally one is known as *hathayoga* and is carried to extraordinary degrees of attainment, making bodily perfection an end in itself. The other, known as *raja-yoga*, is directed rather towards intellectual and mystical development. Yet the two systems have in common an essential physical ethic, to which I now call attention. This is set forth in the classical *sūtras* of Patanjali and in many later works derived from this master psychologist of ancient India.

Among the 'hindrances' to the desired attainment, 'passion' is said to be the third (II 7). Passion is that greed or thirst or desire for either pleasure or the means of attaining it, says the philosopher. Pleasure is to be rejected by the *yogin* because it is intermingled with pain (II 15). That disposes of the psychological attraction of sexuality, and in later *sūtras* we are led to physical considerations.

There are eight aids to *yoga's* end, the first and second are called "Abstentions and Observances" and constitute the

supposed facts, which speak for themselves. A personal sexual ethic, therefore, for any age or civilization will be drawn from the data which most impress men in their own experience. This personal sexual ethic, like the social sexual ethic, varies from age to age, but it has some elements of stability in it, which are more or less permanent.

In attempting to formulate a personal sexual ethic for these times, one would draw from all known facts and probabilities, especially when these are confirmed by the experience of reliable observers. I am not assuming too much when I say that the facts adduced in my sections I to V suggest immediately to the mind of a candid and intelligent reader a number of logical and inevitable conclusions. From the point of view of bodily, mental and spiritual welfare, sexual continence would appear to be the refutable law deduced from the facts. But immediately another law springs up to challenge it — 'the law in our members' as the Christian apostle calls it. We are in the presence of an antinomy — law contradicting law. The older law is that of Nature, whence we have sexual impulse; the newer law is that of intuition, of science, of experience of conviction, of ideal. Obedience to the older law tends to decay and premature death (speaking relatively); the path of the newer law is beset with difficulties so great that one hardly listens seriously to its voice. People cannot get themselves to believe the statement of the case. They begin at once to say: But, but, but? It is worthy of remark here that the formulation of the strictest ethic by *yogi*n, *bhikkhu* and monk does not, as is so often believed, rest on mythologic fables or superstitions, but on an intuition of the physiological facts described in this essay.

I know of no modern writer who has stated the case for the sexual ethic for the Christian more forcibly or clearly than Leo Tolstoy, the now discredited idealist of what once was Russia. I print it here as an illustration of the old philosopher's views.

102. The instinct of the continuation of the race — the sexual instinct — is innate in man. In the animal condition he

\* The reader should remember that Tolstoy's definition of sin has no theological connotation; sin is defined by him as that which constitutes an obstacle to the manifestation of *love*, which in its turn is defined as universal goodwill.

psychic ends, any form of sexual indulgence is disallowed, to the man who has entered into the bond of marriage, sexuality outside it is forbidden. Further, promiscuous or irregular intercourse of the unmarried would nevertheless exclude such a degrading relation as prostitution, while any person engaging in natural act should shun unnatural vices. Finally, to any class of persons indulging at all, over-indulgence would be regarded as an evil, while for the immature and the youthful, indulgence should be postponed. Such is the system of sexual ethic.

I can hardly think that anyone can be found incapable of understanding the nature of this general sexual ethic, and there must be very few who would on serious reflection deny its force. There is a tendency, however, to meet such an ethic by sophistry of various kinds. People suppose that because continence is difficult and undoubtedly rare, its advocacy is invalid. Logically they should say the same of fidelity in marriage — which is in some cases difficult — or restricted indulgence within it, or adherence to the natural practice. If they deny one ideal, they may deny all and permit us to fall into the lowest vices and inordinate lust. Why not? The only reasonable and logical method is to follow the star above us, the star of the ideal that leads us out of one declension after another and enables us to conquer by the power of one law, the power of its antinomy. Thus by the intelligent and volitional practice of this ethic a man may conceivably be raised from the unnatural vices of youth to natural indulgence even if promiscuous, from this he may be drawn to the discipline of married fidelity, and for the sake of himself and his partner, to such restraint as they are able to endure. The same ethic may lead him on to the higher victories of continence, or indeed catch him before he has sunk to the several lower phases of indulgence.

## VII. EROS AND AGAPE

The New Testament has much teaching in reference to 'love', and adopts two conceptions, which must be separately examined. The first is that of *eros*, the passive love of life, of the world, of man and woman, of the manifold sensations and emotions that yield us pleasure. This *eros* is not a matter of our wilful choice, we are attracted here and repelled there, we

*eros* in them, as in him, asks for life. The Christian conception of life, therefore, does not deny the claims of *eros*, but emphasizes the duty of *agape*. Christian ethic is thus a new life direction, a turning round from the way of the world, from the seeking of private welfare, to positive goodwill and universal welfare.

The early Christians were taught, like other people, a 'golden rule', but even though this were intelligible enough they were taught also something still more lofty and metaphysical. Men are to imitate God as He is perfect in loving-kindness, so also must His servants be "because God is love" *hoti ho theos agape estin* (Matt v, 48, John Ep I, IV, 8).

### VIII. SOCIAL SEXUAL ETHIC

Just as society is the extension and co-ordination of the activities of individuals, so a social sexual ethic rises out of a personal one. In other words, society requires additions to and qualifications of the personal ethic, and the chief instance of these is the institution of marriage. A great deal has been written upon the history of marriage by learned scientists, and the data collected are immense. Nothing but the bare conclusion need be cited here in order to enable us to refer to modern expedients that are being offered.

Anciently, and arising out of the facts of the human reproduction, the mother was naturally the more important of the two partners. She was, as she still is, the chief agent of nature's process. Within her and around her are the centres of family growth. Consequently matriarchy, or the rule of the mother, was once widely recognized, and polyandry, the practice of associating several males with the central female, was admitted. There are vestiges of this system still in vogue among the primitive tribes of Asia. Out of it, and partly as a consequence of tribal association, the status of the husband was evolved. One of the several men associated with the mother — the strongest and most attractive defender — was raised to a position of preference. Indeed, the word 'husband' contains the history of the institution down to early Scandinavian times. He was *husbuondi*, the house-dweller, bound, as others were not, to the house. Eventually, the husband

## IX. CONCLUSION

Like the seed cast by the sower, this essay will fall into the hands of some who will despise it, of those who from incapacity or sheer idleness will not even understand it. In some of those who for the first time hear of its ideas it will rouse opposition and even anger, but to a few it will appeal as truthful and useful. Yet even they will find doubts and questions arising in their minds. The simplest of them will say to me "According to your arguments sexual intercourse ought not to take place, the world would then become unpeopled — which is absurd! Therefore you must be wrong". My reply is that I have no such dangerous nostrum to offer. 'Birth Control' is the most potent form of birth prevention and will depopulate the world faster than the attempted practice of continence. My purpose is a simple one by offering certain philosophic and scientific truths as a challenge to ignorance and indulgence, I desire to help to purify the sexual life of our time.

## Appendix II

## CHASTITY AND SENSUALITY\*

The subject of sex is a remarkable one, since, though its phenomena concern us so much, both directly and indirectly, and, sooner or later, it occupies the thoughts of all, yet all mankind, as it were, agree to be silent about it, at least the sexes commonly one to another. One of the most interesting of all human facts is veiled more completely than any mystery. It is treated with such secrecy and awe as surely do not go to any religion. I believe that it is unusual even for the most intimate friends to communicate the pleasures and anxieties connected with this fact, much as the external affair of love, its comings and goings are hinted. The Shakers do not exaggerate it so much by their manner of speaking of it as all mankind by their manner of keeping silence about it. Not that men should speak on this or any subject without having anything worthy to say, but it is plain that the education of man has hardly commenced — there is so little genuine intercommunication.

---

\* From *Essays* by Henry David Thoreau.

beverage So he must not hear sweetened and coloured words, but pure and refreshing truths He must daily bathe in truth cold as spring water, not warmed by the sympathy of friends

Can love be in ought allied to dissipation? Let us love by refusing, not accepting, one another Love and lust are far asunder The one is good, the other bad When the affectionate sympathize by their higher natures, there is love, but there is danger that they will sympathize by their lower natures, and then there is lust It is not necessary that this be deliberate, hardly even conscious, but, in the close contact of affection, there is danger that we may stain and pollute one another, for we cannot embrace but with an entire embrace.<sup>6</sup>

We must love our friend so much that she shall be associated with our purest and holiest thoughts alone. When there is impurity we have 'descended to meet', though we know it not

The *luxury* of affection, — there's the danger There ~~must~~ be some nerve and heroism in our love, as of a winter morning In the religion of all nations a purity is hinted at, which, I fear, men never attain to We may love and not elevate one another. The love that takes us as it finds us degrades us What watch we must keep over the fairest and purest of our affections, lest there be some taint about them! May we so love as never to have occasion to repent of our love!

There is to be attributed to sensuality the loss to language of how many pregnant symbols? Flowers which, by their infinite hues and fragrance, celebrate the marriage of the plants, are intended, for a symbol of the open and unsuspected beauty of all true marriage, when man's flowering season arrives.

Virginity too is a budding flower, and by an impure marriage the virgin is deflowered Whoever loves flowers loves virgins and chastity Love and lust are as far asunder as a flower-garden is from a brothel

J Biberg, in the *Amoenitates Botanicæ*, edited by Linnaeus, observes (I translate from the Latin) "The organs of generation, which, in the animal kingdom, are for the most part concealed by nature, as if they were to be ashamed of, in the vegetable kingdom are exposed to the eyes of all, and when the nuptials of plants are celebrated, it is wonderful what delight they afford to the beholder, refreshing the senses with the most

